

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ŚRĪKṚṢṆA-CAITANYA

by

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the present thesis has been to reconstruct as far as possible the life and times of the historical Caitanya (Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya), a Bengali Saint who lived from 1486 to 1533 and founded an important Vaiṣṇava movement in Bengal, popularly known as Neo Vaiṣṇavism.

We have devoted eight chapters to the reconstruction of Caitanya's life. In the main the following method has been adopted. In each chapter summaries of various versions of the particular incident or episode to be discussed in that chapter have been presented in the manner of evidence in a court of enquiry. We have then examined the various accounts put forward by our various witnesses and other biographers and tried to determine the main outline or framework of events in each case. Where a witness/biographer has appeared to distort unduly this basic outline, which is found in the majority of the versions, we have attempted to ascertain the reason for this particular distortion of his evidence. Thus to some extent, the thesis not only examines the life of the historical Caitanya, but also the myth-making process, as revealed in his various biographies.



Throughout these eight chapters our method has been to be as far as possible objective, i.e., we have attempted to view Caitanya with modern, twentieth-century eyes. In the final chapter we have tried to see him with the eyes of sixteenth-century man in the context of his times. Thus in this final chapter we have been forced to bring to bear our imaginative insight, to penetrate into the mind of Caitanya and his companions in order to gain a more complete perspective of the man and his times.

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6. Udāna. Pali text society.

7. Journal of the Behar and Orissa Research Society. (sic)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Caitanya-<del>Caritamṛta</del></u> , by Murāri Gupta	.. ..	Kaṭacā
<u>Caitanya-<del>Caritamṛta</del> Mahā Kāvya</u> , by Kavikarṇa Pūra	.. ..	Mahā Kāvya
<u>Caitanya-<del>Candrodaya</del> Nāṭaka</u> , by Kavikarṇa Pūra	.. ..	Nāṭaka
<u>Caitanya Bhāgavata</u> , by Vṛndāvanadāsa	.. ..	C-bhā
<u>Caitanya-<del>Maṅgala</del></u> , by Jayānandadāsa	.. ..	Jayānanda
<u>Caitanya-<del>Maṅgala</del></u> , by Locanadāsa	.. ..	Locanadāsa
<u>Śrī Caitanya-<del>Caritāmṛta</del></u> , by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja	.. ..	C-C
<u>Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dīpikā</u> , by Kavikarṇa Pūra	.. ..	G.G.D.



## CHAPTER I

### BENGAL IN THE TIME OF CAITANYA.

#### Introductory remarks:

The purpose of this background chapter is not to paint a detailed picture of the time in which Caitanya lived, but merely to indicate the context, cultural, social, political, economic and religious, in which his movement began, by attempting to throw light upon those factors which seem to us either to have contributed to the success of the movement or to reveal its aims and objects.

#### Cultural, Social, Economic and Political Aspects

The shift of power from Hindu to Muslim hands in Bengal produced important cultural and social repercussions.

Buddhist monastries were sacked and the monks rendered homeless and destitute. Some may have fled to Nepal, but the majority no doubt remained in Bengal, where many of their spiritual descendants might well

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later be absorbed into Hindu Society via Vaiṣṇavism<sup>1</sup>. We do not know what happened to the monks. Many may have fled to Burma or elsewhere, others may have been killed; a few may have become secular. Much more important, because certainly far more numerous are the laymen and, in general, the ordinary Buddhists.

Before the coming of the Muslims, Sanskrit was the dominant literary language of Bengal and the Brāhmaṇa the dominant social class. The dominance and prestige of both had largely depended upon Hindu political power and patronage. The coming of the Muslims largely

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1. No doubt the proselytising zeal of Islam was responsible for the dissolution of the Buddhist monasteries in Bengal. Nevertheless, it appears that Buddhism was prevalent in parts of Bengal, especially Mahāyāna. This Mahāyāna had gradually absorbed Tantric and Śaivite elements, though fewer forms of Buddhism probably continued side by side. The explicit reference to the conversion of some Buddhists and the postulations of the Buddhist traditions in the life of Caitanya by the contemporary literature confirm that Buddhism existed in Bengal at least until the 16th Century A.D. The task of a future research worker is to try to determine the chronology to see whether there is any connection between the decline of Buddhism and the expansion of Vaiṣṇavism.

terminated this source of patronage, and in consequence the prestige of Sanskrit and the predominance of the Brāhmaṇas waned.

Supported by the power and patronage of the Hindu Kings of the Sena dynasty (1100 to A.D. 1200) the Brāhmaṇas had been able either to suppress or at least to hold in check many of the local popular cults and practices, which they despised. Freed from this stifling pressure by the Muslims, these indigenous cults, such as those of Candī and Manasā, flourished. These cults had long been incorporated into Hinduism probably by the Brāhmaṇas. The apparent expansion of Manasā and Candī cult in the later period is apparently connected with the decline of Brāhmaṇa scholarship. By the time of Caitanya (1486-1533), these cults had gained allegiance even in the Hindu merchant community, and were thus in a position to hire Brāhmaṇa priests<sup>1</sup> to officiate at their ceremonies and also to compose long narrative poems (Maṅgala-kāvya) in honour of their deities. Many of these narratives reached their final form during the

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1. T.W.Clark, Evolution of Hinduism in Mediaeval Bengali Literature (Reprinted from the BSOAS, 1955, XVII/3, P.514.

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time of Caitanya and some versions were even commissioned by Muslims.

Thus by Caitanya's time, many important changes had either already taken place or were in process of taking place:

i) Vernacular literature in Bengali had commenced. The Muslim rulers and officials were beginning to patronise Bengali literature.

ii) The merchant community had become an important source of patronage, replacing that of the old Hindu aristocracy to some extent.

iii) Brāhmaṇas had begun to serve popular cults as either poets or priests.

The commencement of Bengali literature in Caitanya's time is evidenced by the following works which were composed at about this time.

The name of Author	Description of work	Patron
(a) Unknown (presumably a Hindu)	A translation of the Mahābhārata	Nasir Shah <sup>1</sup> (sic) (I285-I325 A.D.)
(b) Vidyāpati	Short lyrics on Vaiṣṇava themes	Giasuddin <sup>2</sup> (sic) (I389-I409 A.D.)
(c) Mālādhara Vasu (Popularly known as Gunaṛāja Khān)	Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Vijaya (I480)	Husain Shah <sup>3</sup> (I493-I519) (
(d) Vipradāsa Piplāi	Manasā-Vijaya	Husain Shah <sup>4</sup>
(e) Vijaya Gupta	Padma Purāṇa	Hussain Shah <sup>5</sup> (sic)
(f) Parameśvara (popularly known as Kavindra)	A translation of the Mahabharata	Parāgala Khāna <sup>6</sup> a general and governor of Hussain Shah (sic)
(g) Śrī Karaṇa Nandi	A translation of the Mahabharata	Nāsarāt Khāna <sup>7</sup> (sic) a governor
(h) Dāmodara Sena (popularly known as Yasaraṇa Khān)	Lyric songs on Vaiṣṇava themes.	Husain Shah <sup>8</sup>

1. History of the Bengali Language and Literature D.C.Sen.P.11.
2. Ibid, P.11.
3. Bāṅglā Sahityer Itihāsa, S.Sen Ed.1965. OP.cit; P.59
4. Bāṅglā Sahityer Itivṛtta, A.K.Banerjee, P.5.
5. History of the Bengali Language and Literature D.C.Sen. P.I2.
6. Ibid, P.I2.
7. Ibid, P.I2.
8. Bāṅglā Sahityer Itivṛtta, A.K.Banerjee, P.5.

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The importance of the merchant community on this period is well documented. The Bengali ports of Tamralipti (Tamluka) in the Midnapur district, Saptagrām (Satgaon) in the Hooghly district had attained world-wide renown. Gauṇī itself was well known as a great commercial centre of the time. These ports came in close contact with the foreign ports such as Malabar, Ceylon, Pegu, Tenasserim, Sumatra, Malacca. Bengal exported silk, silk cloth, muslins, rice, oil and sugar. Bengal was rich in cash crops such as rice and jute, and also in manufactured goods, such as Bengali muslin and silk clothes which were widely known.<sup>1</sup>

The importance and prestige of the merchant community is also evident from contemporary literature. In the East Bengal Ballads and the Maṇigala-kāvyaś, merchants are often accorded the titles of Prince and Narapati<sup>2</sup> by the authors and members of the mercantile classes intermarry in the ballads with members of the aristocracy. There are also other mediæval tales in which sons of kings, ministers and merchants figure

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1. Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itivṛtta, A.K. Banerjee P.25.

2. T.W. Clark, Evolution of Hinduism in Mediæval Bengali Literature. Reprinted from the BSOAS, 1955, XVII/3, p. 514.

together as joint heroes, who associate and converse on terms of almost complete equality. Furthermore, the climax of the Maṅgala-Kāvya<sup>1</sup> generally concerns the conversion to the worship of the particular god or goddess named of an important member<sup>1</sup> of the mercantile community. Thus the mercantile community, whose economic importance is historically well documented, must also have enjoyed great prestige by virtue of the patronage it could wield. In the absence of Hindu Kings, its prestige in the Hindu community was probably greater or at least equal to that of the feudatory Hindu Kings and chieftains, who still retained power in Bengal on Muslim sufferance.

In view of the great wealth and prestige of the merchants, it is understandable that Nityānanda, one of Caitanya's most important disciples, should later have made such strenuous efforts to convert them: they were the most powerful potential patrons of Vaiṣṇavism left in Bengal.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that Brāhmaṇas had begun to serve in

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1. Cāṇḍo, the merchant submitted to Manasā Devī. See Vipradāsa's Manasā-Vijaya: Canto 13, sections 8-10.

2. Cāṇḍo bhā Antya, V, 443; Antya, V, 450-454.

popular cults as either priests or poet poets is evidence of the serious economic distress to which Muslims rule in Bengal had reduced them<sup>1</sup>. Previously the Brāhmāṇas had despised vernacular literature<sup>2</sup> and indigenous cults. Now they were composing the one and searching out theological justification for the other. Some Brāhmāṇas<sup>3</sup> were now in the service of the Muslim ruler, Husayn Shāh (1493-1519 A.D.). For some Brāhmāṇas, of course, government service of this sort was an hereditary occupation. Members of their families had previously served Hindu administrations in this capacity of Ministers, record-keepers etc. But service of the Muslims involved them in intimate social relations with their superiors and thus loss of caste

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1. Caitanya is said to have asked Śrīdhara, a pious Vaiṣṇava, how it was that he who worshipped Lakṣmī-Kānta (the lover of Lakṣmī, i.e. Viṣṇu) was so poor whilst those who worshipped Caṇḍī and Viṣaḥarī (Manasā) were rich. See C.bhā, Ādi, XII, 183-187.
  2. "If a person hears the stories of eighteen Purāṇas or of the Rāmāyaṇa recited in Bengali he will be thrown into the hell called the Raurava". History of the Bengali language and literature, D.C.Sen, p.7.
  3. E.G. Brahmins like Rūpa Gośvāmī and his brother Sanātāna Gośvāmī were popular ministers under the Administration of Husayn Shāh.



and ritual purity<sup>1</sup>, and even in some cases, conversion to Islam, presented themselves as possible dangers. It was probably dangers such as these which prompted Raghunandana<sup>2</sup> to compose his strictures on Hinduism. Raghunandana's strictures may in fact be regarded as a reaction to the laxity in regard to Hindu observances, which resulted from this close intercourse with Muslims. The strictures may also in part have been directed against those Brāhmaṇas who were stooping to serve popular cults.

Further evidence of the decline of Brahmanic prestige is presented by the migrations of Brāhmaṇa families from East Bengal. Most of the biographers agree that Caitanya's father and many family friends seem to have migrated to Navadvīpa from East Bengal. The motives for their migration were probably economic. It may well have been during this period that the Muslim predominance in East Bengal developed owing to the

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1. Rūpa and Sanātana described themselves impure in the presence of Caitanya because of their association with and service in the Muslim administration of Hussain Sāha. (C-C, Madhya, I, 172-202).
  2. Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itivṛtta, A.K. Banerjee, vol.2, 1962, pp. 37-39.

conversion to Islam of lower-caste Hindu<sup>1</sup>. Such conversions would presumably reduce the number of clients on whose behalf Brāhmaṇas could officiate. Thus the absence of clients would cause the Brāhmaṇas to migrate elsewhere. This seems to us the most plausible explanation for these migrations.

This influx of Brāhmaṇas into Navadvīpa seems to have produced serious local tensions in the Hindu community there. The incoming Brāhmaṇas seem to have been mainly Vaiṣṇavas. From time to time trouble developed between these Vaiṣṇavas and so-called Pāṣaṇḍīs who were in fact merely non-Vaiṣṇava Hindus.

There is evidence of these inter-communal flare-ups, for example, in the story of Gopāla Cāpāla, who deliberately desecrated Vaiṣṇava worship by the introduction of a palm wine jug into the midst of the various religious objects arranged outside the gate of Śrīvāsa<sup>2</sup>, and also with the support of the Pāṣaṇḍīs the Kāzi of Navadvīpa temporarily banned Nagara-Saṁkīrtana<sup>3</sup>.

The basic cause of these inter-communal

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1. A.K. Banerjee, Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itivṛtta, vol.2. pp.192-193.

2. See ibid p. 185

3. C-bhā Madhya, XXIII, 101-114.

flare-ups was probably economic: there must have been a limit to the number of Brāhmaṇas<sup>c</sup> which even a rich area like Navadvīpa could afford to support. The established Brāhmaṇa families in the area seem to have derived their livelihood mainly from Sanskrit scholarship. These families presumably resented the intrusion of the Vaiṣṇava immigrants into their sources of patronage. There is evidence to suggest that the younger members of the Vaiṣṇava community were throwing in their lot with the older established scholastic families. Caitanya himself became a scholar, and at times ridiculed the East Bengal agents<sup>1</sup> of his family and family friends, and also declined to participate in Vaiṣṇava ceremonies. It is possible that Raghunanda's strictures were also in part directed against the Vaiṣṇavas, who are traditionally regarded by the orthodox as somewhat lax in their observances.

There is abundant evidence of Muslim rulers and officials beginning to patronise Bengali literature. Translations of the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa were commissioned by Muslim patrons. Even a version of a Maṅgala-Kāvya, Manasā Vijaya was

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1. C-bhā Ādi, XV, 18-22.

commissioned by a Muslim patron, ~~Husena Saka~~. Muslim patrons were eulogised as incarnations of Hindu deities and apparently saw no offence in such compliments. Parāgala Khāna was described as Kṛṣṇāvatāra<sup>1</sup> by Protége Kavindra Paramesvara, who translated the Mahābhārata,

This patronage of Hindu Bengali literature by Muslims is extremely significant. It would seem to suggest that the Pathan rulers of Bengal had imported little or no culture of their own with them into Bengal.<sup>2</sup> It also seems to suggest that the Muslim Pathans in Bengal were by now Indianised. They presumably had a fluent knowledge of Bengali, otherwise they would not have commissioned works in the language. Sukumar Sen suggests that ~~Husena Saka~~ may even have had a knowledge of Sanskrit. These Pathan Muslims were now largely of Indian birth. Bengal was their motherland.

It is possible that this commissioning of Bengali works, and the atmosphere of religious tolerance that went hand in hand with it during ~~Husena Saka~~'s reign in Bengal was largely prompted by political considerations.

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1. History of Bengali Language and Literature, D.C. Sen. pp. 13-

2. This suggestion would seem to be borne out by the fact that Muslim influence on Bengali literature does not begin to be felt till the 17th.

Husein Sahn may have been deliberately attempting to create a sense of national unity in Bengal, by laying the foundations of a national literature in Bengali. Possibly he hoped by these means to bolster up his independence from the Delhi Sultanate by the establishment of a strong and popular regime. It is equally possible that he felt so at home in Bengal and so at ease with Bengalis that he merely commissioned the works for personal enjoyment and that he tolerated Hindu practices out of genuine affection for his subjects.

At all events it would seem true that by the time of Husein Sahn the Muslims had become more tolerant towards the Hindus than the Hindus were towards each other. Hindu society was seriously divided. There <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ frictions between the Vaiṣṇavas and the Pāṣaṇḍīs. Orthodox extremists like Raghunandana were trying to suppress non-conformity. The indigenous cults were still regarded as inferior as is suggested by the struggles of their deities to gain worship from the socially prominent, as depicted in the narratives themselves; e.g. Cāṇḍo Sadāgara eventually worships Manasā, but with his left hand, an indication of contempt.<sup>1</sup>

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1. T.W. Clark, Evolution of Hinduism in Mediaeval Bengali Literature, p. 514.

Travellers and pilgrims were as likely to be set upon by Hindus as by Muslims. According to Kṛṣṇadāsa kaviṛāja, Śaṇāṭana Gośvāmī was once nearly murdered by a Hindu landowner for as little as eight mohars<sup>1</sup>. Caitanya himself was once discovered unconscious by a party of Pathan soldiers, who immediately assumed that his companions were in fact his attackers<sup>2</sup>. Apparently, Thuggee and highway robbery by bands of dakoits dressed as religious devotees was a commonplace.

Hindu armies invading neighbouring territories were just as likely as Muslim armies to sack and loot Hindu temples; e.g. Puruṣottama Deva of Orissa sacked Hindu temples in South India and brought back images as booty to Orissa<sup>3</sup>. The fact is that it is recent history alone which leads us to expect a direct opposition between Hindu and Muslim and a sense of cohesion and unity within the Hindu community. In mediæval India no such situation existed.

The fact that two states were Hindu did not necessarily mean that they would be

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1. C-C Madhya, xx, 15-29.

2. Ibid., Madhya, xviii, 152-155.

3. Ibid., Madhya, v, 117-123.

friendly to each other. Similarly, both the Delhi Sultanate and ~~Huse~~<sup>Huse</sup>~~na~~ ~~Sāha~~ were equally Muslim, but this did not prevent ~~Huse~~<sup>Huse</sup>~~na~~ ~~Sāha~~ from desiring to maintain his independence. Again both the Pāṣaṇḍīs and the Vaiṣṇavas were Hindu communities, but this did not prevent the Pāṣaṇḍīs from trying to get Caitanya into trouble with the Kāzi. The thing is that as now allegiances and disputes between states and communities were largely dictated by self-interest, not religious principles.

Within Bengal in Caitanya's day according to his biographies, Hindu-Muslim relations appear to have been amicable. The Muslim Kāzi took no action against Caitanya, even though Caitanya deliberately and provocatively broke his injunctions regarding the performance of Sanikīrtana. When ~~Huse~~<sup>Huse</sup>~~na~~ ~~Sāha~~ happened to witness one of Caitanya's devotional ecstasies, and enquired who the man was, so as to show him some mark of favour, it was ~~Huse~~<sup>Huse</sup>~~na~~'s Hindu body-guard who belittled Caitanya's importance, in order to protect him from possible persecution.<sup>1</sup> When imprisoned for debt, a pious Hindu youth was released by a Muslim official, who was touched

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1. C-bhāAntya, IV, 24-65.

by the youth's piety.<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted that the tolerance in all these cases was on the Muslim side, not the Hindu. In the first instance it was impulsive Caitanya who apparently violated the injunction, not the Kāzi and in the second it was the Hindu whose motives were devious not Husana Sāh's. The distrust of Husana Sāh in the second instance was probably due to a lingering memory of Islamic intolerance and oppression during the Havsl interregnum<sup>2</sup> (1487-1493). Apart from this brief flare-up of Islamic fanaticism, religious tolerance had reigned in Bengal for several decades.

### Religious aspects

The Dāmodara/<sup>Pura</sup>copper plate inscription No. 4 indicates that in the year A.D. 447/8, some land was donated for the maintainance of Govinda Śvāmī's temple.<sup>3</sup> The inscription of the Gupta and the post Gupta period suggest that the Viṣṇu cult well may have been popular. The Susunia Rock inscription of Candravarmana probably

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1. C-C Antya, VI, 16-33.

2. History of Bengal, vol. 2., pp. 138-141.

3. E.P. Inde, Vol. XV, p. 113; Vol. XVII, pp. 193, 345.



belonging to the 4th Century A.D., in which the Prince is styled as a 'worshipper of Viṣṇu'.<sup>1</sup>

Over the years, the mode of worship has been changed, since it is believed that a statue which came to light in the Paharpur excavation represents the Yugala-Mūrti of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.<sup>2</sup> Relying on the authenticity of the Belāva inscription of Bhoja-Varman (circa 11th Century A.D.) Dr. De writes: "Mention is made of Śrīkṛṣṇa not only as the Mahabhārata Sutrādhāra, but also as the gopi-śata-kelikāra of the Śrīmad-bhāgavata, although he is still an incarnation (aṁśa-kṛtavatāra) and not the <sup>e</sup>supreme deity himself".<sup>3</sup>

It is a fact that the official religion of the Pāla dynasty was Buddhism. The Pāla kings were tolerant towards other religions. In fact, they even encouraged the Vaiṣṇavas to build their own temples. Indeed we find inscriptions relating to the construction of Viṣṇu temples and numerous Viṣṇu images scattered

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1. Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement, S.K. De, p. 8.

2. The Age of the Imperial Guptas, R.D. Banerjee, p. 121.

3. Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement, S.K. De, p. 8.

throughout Bengal.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that from this time onward, some form of Vaiṣṇava bhakti cult began to develop in Bengal. The worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa spread throughout Bengal on a wide scale in the twelfth century A.D. Umāpati Dham, Govardhana Ācāryya and emperor Lakṣmaṇasena composed many verses glorifying the Līlā of Rādhā Kṛṣṇa. This was the time when Jayadeva composed Gīta-govinda.<sup>2</sup> To the Vaiṣṇavas the Gīta-govinda was not only a great work of refined poetical expression but also a religious work. There is no evidence to show that Jayadeva composed the Gīta-govinda with the express purpose of illustrating any special doctrine. Whatever may have been the original motivation of the work, its emotional mysticism was undoubtedly one of the major sources for the religious inspiration of the Caitanya movement.<sup>3</sup> Caitanya is said to have appreciated the melodious work of Jayadeva and Vidyāpati. It is for this reason that the Vaiṣṇavas regard Jayadeva and Vidyāpati as orthodox Vaiṣṇavas. Śrīdhara-dāsa collected many devotional poems in the Saḍukti-karnāmṛta. It is

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1. Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture, R.D. Banerjee, p. 101.

2. Caitanya Caritam Upādāna, B. Majumdar, p. 577.

3. Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement, S.K. De, p. 10.

probable that Ananta Baṇu Caṇḍīdāsa was a poet of the 14th Century A.D. His Kṛṣṇa Kīrtāna gives a wonderful picture to show how the general mass used to taste Kṛṣṇa-līlā.

Śrīrūpa Gosvāmī was well conversant with the history of Premādharmā of Bengal in the pre-Caitanya era. In his Paḍyāvali he collected the ślokaś of Lakṣmaṇa Sena, Umāṣati Dhara etc. He writes that some of Caitanya's teachings are not found in the Vedaś, Upaniṣadś or in other descriptions of the previous incarnations of God.<sup>1</sup> Thus Rūpa Gosvāmī must have discovered some striking originality in Caitanya.

Mādhavendra Purī has been described as the originator of Premādharmā in the Gauṛīya Vaiṣṇava literature. Caitanya is said to have declared that Mādhavendra Purī was the originator of the Premādharmā in Bengal.<sup>2</sup> What~~e~~ver may be the basis of the statement it is a fact that Caitanya's religious experiences had carried him away into an extreme form of bhakti and he moulded this movement through his personal practice and religious experience of bhakti.

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1. Caitanya Cariteṇ Upādāna, B. Majumdar, p. 577.

2. C-bhāḍi, IX, 160.

The literature of the Sect mentions the following disciples of Mādhavendra Purī: (i) Advaitā Ācāryya (2) Īśvara-Purī (3) Paramānanda Purī (4) Vrahmānanda Purī (5) Viṣṇu Purī (6) Keśava Purī (7) Kṛṣṇānanda Purī (8) Nṛsiṃha Tīrtha (9) Sukhānanda Purī (10) Rāṅga Purī (11) Rāmaṇḍra Purī (12) Brahmānanda Bhāratī (13) Raghunātha Purī (14) Ananta Purī (15) Asara Purī (16) Gopāla Purī (17) Saṃkarṣaṇa Purī (18) Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhī (19) Keśava Bhāratī.<sup>1</sup>

Viṣṇu Purī and Paramānanda Purī were born at Tirhut. Advaita Ācāryya was born at Śrīhaṭṭa (md. Hālisahar). Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhī was born at Chittagong. Thus it is possible to say that Paramānanda Purī was born in the South of India, Śrīkaṅga Purī was born in West India. Puṇḍarīka and Advaita were born in the east. Īśvara Purī was born in the north of India.<sup>2</sup> These disciples propagated the Prema-dharma originated by Mādhavendra Purī in all quarters of India. This then appears to have been the condition of Vaiṣṇavism prior

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1. Caitanya Caritenj Upadana, B. Majumdar, op.cit., pp. 577-578.

2. Ibid., P.578.

to Caitanya

In this connection it is necessary to discuss briefly the Hindu method of conversion, as we understand it. Many castes were probably in origin tribes, aboriginal tribes, each with its own type of beliefs. It perhaps worshipped tigers, or snakes, or just some particular tree or stone. As far as we can make out, a tribe was converted to Hinduism when its particular deity or deities were identified with a deity or deities in the Hindu Pantheon. Manasā<sup>1</sup>, for example, was identified as the daughter of Śiva. Caṇḍī became a group name for various local mother goddesses and was also identified with Kālī, the terrible dark goddess. The aboriginal origins of some of these goddesses can be seen to some extent in their respective Maṅgala-kāvyas; e.g. Caṇḍī was originally worshipped by hunters and butchers, low and vile occupations in the eyes of most Hindus.

As we have seen earlier, in or about the time of Caitanya, the cult-tales and stories of these local gods and goddesses were reaching their final form under the skilled hands of Brāhmaṇa poets, who, to make their obnoxious subject matter acceptable, were moulding the

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1. Evolution of Hinduism in Medieval Bengali Literature,  
T.W. Clark. P. 513.

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stories in the form of Purāṇas, giving the tales/suitable Paurāṇika introduction, for example, the relationship between Manasā and Śiva is brought out: She is made the daughter of his ~~sp~~<sup>e</sup>~~el~~<sup>e</sup>; and thus afforded good Hindu credentials. Heroes and heroines of these cult-tales of Maṇigala-kāvya are caused to be of divine origin, sent to earth for some little lapse in Indra's heaven. Behulā, the heroine of Manasā-Maṇigala, for example was a dancing girl from Indra's heaven. In the appropriate Paurāṇika ending such heroes and heroines are restored to heaven at the conclusion of the tale.

Such remoulding of indigenous cult-tales was bringing into the Hindu fold whole tribes to become castes within the Hindu system. It should be pointed out that this absorption had probably taken place long before Caitanya's time. The stories, it should be remembered, were only reaching their final form in his day. There is no knowing the dates of the earliest crude versions.

Being a Hindu meant merely behaving as one's father behaved and as his father before him had also behaved. As for beliefs, one believed in a particular Purāṇa or Maṇigala-kāvya, or whatever groups of such works were known in one's area.

Hinduism was a social order. As with every other social order that has ever existed, the overriding consideration with Hinduism were economic and social, not religious. The important thing was conformity, not belief. Individuals were forced into conformity by economic and social sanctions. The father of a recalcitrant youth would be threatened with heavy financial losses by the caste council; the father would discipline the youth by threats of disinheritance. The financial losses would be incurred by religious penances, of course, which gave the punishment a religious air, but the punishment was really economic: either a loss of property in paying for the penances or a loss of livelihood through excommunication.

Now, Islam presented an economic, social and religious threat to Hinduism. Whole castes were probably being converted to Islam. This meant financial loss to the Hindu community. There were less people to contribute to the up-keep of the temples and the brahmins. Well-educated sons in the employ of Muslims, could afford to be converted. No economic sanctions could be brought to bear against them, for their livelihood depended upon Muslims, not Hindus.

Thus the threat to Hinduism was serious. The

social order was likely to break down. Islam offered that all men are equal before God and there is a certain form of brotherhood between men. Hinduism offered a rigid hierarchy. Those at the top of the Hindu hierarchy had something to lose: their sense of status and superiority. The strictures of Raghunandana were sufficient to bring them into line. But those at the bottom had nothing to lose. To these people, Islam offered a new sense of dignity as human beings. It raised them from the contempt to which they had been subjected by the arrogant Hindus at the top of the Hindu hierarchy.

The Caitanya movement was only one of the means of resisting Islam. There were other means, too, such as Maṇigala-kāvya. These down-trodden people whose way of life and occupation was a source of shame and disgrace were suddenly shown that the gods and goddesses they had worshipped so long were related to those of the Hindu Pantheon. The past has a hold on a man. He likes to feel a pride in what he does and believes; and what his father has always done and believed. Thus the Maṇigala-kāvya with their elevated Paurāṇika tone gave him the pride that he wanted and through the Maṇigala-kāvya he clung to his respect for his family and for the past: in short, he remained Hindu.



Probably in his new-found pride, he grew a little boisterous and gave offence to the other castes. Contemporary or new-contemporary writers of Caitanya speak of the foul practices of the cult-worshippers: their drinking, their meat-eating, and their sexual promiscuity.

The Caitanya movement offered another way of resisting Islam and at the same time raising the cult-worshippers to a higher cultural level. The Vaiṣṇavas abhor animal sacrifice. Under Vaiṣṇava influence even within the cults people have adopted Sāttvika practices: they now sacrifice not goats, but cocoanuts and other fruits. The shedding of blood has been entirely eliminated.

The Caitanya movement offered the same things to the low-caste Hindu as ~~he~~ was offered by Buddhism or Islam. <sup>The</sup> Caitanya movement offered to the low-caste Hindu a sense of brotherhood and human dignity. It enjoined ~~in~~ him a sense of brotherhood and human dignity. It enjoined him to observe humility before God, almost to submit himself to God's will.

Our view of man is this: he has both idealistic and materialistic aspects. He likes to see himself from an idealistic point of view, but he operates from realistic motives. There are exceptions, of course. Caitanya

was such an exception, so was Gandhi.

Both denied themselves more than most men are capable of. Both gave up family life, in any meaningful sense. When a man does that, when he denies himself the source of the greatest possible pleasure and fulfillment, then he is outside society. Such men must be regarded as truly superhuman.

But this does not prevent the movement behind these idealists from being realistic. Most men have families and family men are only too aware of economic and social considerations. Thus we would suggest that both Caitanya and Gandhi, though themselves, undoubtedly sincere, were to some extent directed from behind by the materialistic motives of their followers.

Caitanya was a saint and the present thesis attempts to depict his life. The Caitanya movement was a material utilisation of his life of propagandist purposes and was largely the formulation of his followers. The Caitanya movement was thus in our view historically inevitable. It was the result of the peculiar confrontation of Hinduism with Islam.

It was part of a movement sweeping through the whole of North India, when Hindus were seeking to rid themselves of their doctrinal differences in order

to create a sense of unity amongst themselves and a modus vivendi with Islam<sup>1</sup>. But the forms of <sup>the</sup> Caitanya movement, its literary vehicles, symbols, and conventions came from North East India, as indeed they had to, if it was to take root there. Bhakti was sweeping through the whole of North India. This sense of emotional dedication to a personal God is even impregnated to some extent in the Maṅgala-kāvya. The Caitanya movement was another form of this medieval Bhakti movement. It hit upon Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa which was already in the Gīta-govinda, as its forms of expression. The theme was popular. Caitanya and his followers infused a theological/philosophical interpretation into it.

Thus in our view the rise of the Caitanya movement can be understood: there were Vaiṣṇava movements similar to it in Orissa and in North India

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1. The Caitanya movement and the Bhakti movement generally ~~were~~ attempts to rid Hinduism of the sectarian differences that existed in Caitanya's time -as, for example, between Vaiṣṇavas and Pāṇḍīs and between orthodox Hindus and cult-worshippers -and at the same time it was an attempt to create a religion that could exist side by side with Islam; without Islam being able to make converts among the Hindu community.

generally at about the same time. Caitanya was born at a propitious time for his own peculiar psychological and physiological idiosyncracies to have been of use to his society.

Thus to conclude, we would say this: ~~the~~ Caitanya movement, like the strictures of Raghunandan and the contemporary Maṇigala-kāvya, was an attempt to combat Islamic conversion. The strictures of Raghunandana were aimed primarily at the upper castes; the Maṇigala-kāvya at particular popular cults; but the Caitanya movement was directed at Hindu society as a whole. It found converts amongst rationalist intellectuals like Sārvabhauma whose outlook, prior to conversion was Pantheistic, and who, before conversion, had not taken mahāprasāda from the Jagannātha temple in Purī; amongst highly placed Hindu officials in both Muslim and Hindu employ, such as the brothers Rūpa and Sanātana, who once served Husēna Saka in the capacity of ministers, and Rāya-Rāmānanda, a provincial governor of Prataparudra Deva of Orissa; amongst Buddhists and ex-Buddhists, whose orders had been disbanded as a result of the dissolution of their monasteries after the Muslim invasion; and among tantrics and śaivites; in short, amongst all classes of Hindu society, from Kings (Pratāparudra Deva)

to sweepers. The range of its conversion can be judged to some extent by the elements inserted into Caitanya's various biographies: some incidents strike a Buddhist note; in another incident Caitanya is alleged to have been possessed by the spirit of Śiva and to have manifested the matted hair of that deity; in another incident, narrated by Jayānanda, Kālī<sup>1</sup> comes to the assistance of Caitanya, and threatens Husein Sāhā not to interfere with Caitanya's worship. These echoes and insertions would seem to us<sup>to</sup> show honour and respect to particular converts' former allegiances. Whilst at the same time reminding the converts of the subservience of their past deities to Caitanya.

Lastly we would say that the success of the movement depended upon the evangelical fervour with which it was propagated and the peculiar personality of Caitanya which fitted in so perfectly with that form of propagation. Evangelical movements succeed most in times of social upheaval and turmoil: the success of the Caitanya movement is an indication of the social upheaval created by Islam.

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1. Jayānanda, p. 12.

We have accepted the basically factual, eye-witness account of Murāri Gupta and some evidence of the later biographers where they seemed to us plausible and consistent. There are certain features in the later accounts, however, that strike us as improbable and these we have rejected because in the other accounts Caitanya the man becomes obscured beneath Caitanya the saint.

Murāri had before his mind's eye, as he wrote, the figure of Caitanya himself and the moving film of his extraordinary doings. There was no need to elaborate. They still retained the same power to move him in retrospect as they had in reality. But this was not so with the later authors. They were driven back upon their imagination, the commonplaces of contemporary literature and legends. And thus it is that we see them adding Kṛṣṇa anecdotes and Buddhist anecdotes at appropriate places and elaborating similes into metaphors: where Murāri records that Caitanya behaved like a Boar; they record he became a Boar with hooves and horn and all<sup>1</sup>. Murāri called his work Caritamṛta: the later writers called theirs: Mahākāvya, or Maṅgalakāvya, or Bhāgavata, all titles which suggest epic grandeur, or hymns to deities or life stories of gods: i.e., the titles illustrate that they were aware of the fact that they had written the events from the plane of reality to some other legendary plane.

1. Ibid., pp. I53-I59

We could describe the early part of Caitanya's life because we have depended largely on the series of eye-witness accounts, from the time of Caitanya's birth till his departure from Navadvīpa in 1509/10. After 1509/10 Murāri had no personal knowledge of the incidents of Caitanya's life, for he resided in Navadvīpa for the most of the rest of his life and thus his meagre evidence after 1509/10 ceased to be fully reliable and we have shown how he deviates from Kavikarṇapūra in the description of Pratāparudra's conversion.<sup>1</sup> After examining the internal evidence, B. Majumdar<sup>2</sup> in his Caitanya-carītera-upādāna, also maintains the view that the incidents recorded by Murāri after 1509/10, are not reliable.

For the remaining part of Caitanya's life i.e., from 1509/10 to 1533 there is no eye-witness account available. The later authors state that Caitanya left for his southern pilgrimage in 1510 and travelled for two years visiting Shrines and sacred places. It is claimed that a certain Govinda Karmakāra, an attendant of Caitanya in this southern pilgrimage, accompanied him and is alleged to have written a Karacā on his personal observation of Caitanya's activities during these two years. But most Vaiṣṇava scholars are united in maintaining this Karacā to be a forgery. They give the following reasons: (1) it is written in modern Bengali language, (2) the sentiments and Philosophy are different from all those of other works, (3) the authoritative works of the

1. Ibid., pp. 201-238.

2. See B. Majumdar, p. 81., Cf. Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement. p. 36.

movement do not mention the existence of this so-called Karacā, (4) there are some grotesque mistakes in it, e.g., the description of Caitanya's hair as coiled and even matted, whereas Caitanya was always shaven, as a requisite rule of his order of sannyāsīs, (5) he is constantly depicted as conversing with good and bad women alike, on the other hand, his teaching in all other works is that a sannyāsī must have no contact with women whatsoever, and (6) no manuscript of his work has been brought forward for examination. The facts seem to cast very considerable doubt upon the authenticity of these notes and we have rejected this Karacā as a piece of modern fabrication. In this connexion Jadunath Sarkar writes: "We should bear in mind that no record of Caitanya's pilgrimage was kept at the time it was made<sup>1</sup>".

The later biographers state that Caitanya visited Vṛndāvana, Prayāga, Kāśī in 1514 and returned to Nīlācala in 1515/16. Once again we have no eye-witness account or reliable evidence of this phase of Caitanya's life. From 1515/16 Caitanya lived permanently in Purī till his death in 1533. Svarūpa Dāmodara, an intimate disciple of Caitanya, is believed to have written a Karacā upon his personal observation of the later life of Caitanya in Purī. This may well be an authentic account of this period between 1510 and 1533. Unfortunately, no copies of this Karacā have so far come to light. Kānāi Khutiā, another Oriya disciple of Caitanya appears to have written Mahāprakaśa on the later life of

1. J.N.Sarkar. Chaitanya's life and teachings, Calcutta 1932, p. 122.



Caitanya on his personal experience. No original manuscript is available. An American tourist is said to have bought this *Karacā* from one of the modern descendants of the author<sup>1</sup>.

On this account therefore, we have not deemed it fitting to deal in any detail with Caitanya's later life, particularly as this adds little to the evaluation of his personality as an Evangelist.

For the later part of his life we have drawn on the accounts given by the later biographers and therefore, it is fitting to give a brief out line of the main events of Caitanya's later life which we have incorporated in the 'Appendix'.

1. See R. Majumdar. p. 538.

## CHAPTER II

### CHILDHOOD

According to Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Upendra Misra was the grand-father of ŚrīKṛṣṇa-Caitanya. Upendra Misra had achieved profound scholarship in Vaiṣṇava literature. He was rich and virtuous. He had seven sons, i.e., Kamsāri, Paramānanda, Padmanābha, Sarveśvara, Jagannātha, Janārdana and Trailokyanātha. Jagannātha Misra migrated to Navadvīpa to live by the Ganges.<sup>1</sup>

Kavikarnapūra mentions Upendra Misra as the grand-father of ŚrīKṛṣṇa-Caitanya.<sup>2</sup>

All the biographers of Caitanya agree that Jagannātha Misra settled in the academic city of Navadvīpa to study and to live by the holy Ganges. He was learned and handsome in person and this led Nīlambhara Cakravartin, a well-known astrologer of the day, to give to him in marriage his deeply religious and sensible daughter Sacī Devī.<sup>3</sup> Sacī gave birth to eight daughters in

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1. C-C Ādi, XIII, 54-56.

2. G.G.D. p. 35.

3. Kāṇḍa. 1.2.1-4.

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succession, all of whom died shortly after birth.<sup>1</sup> At last she gave birth to a son, who was named Viśvarūpa.<sup>2</sup> Several years after she gave birth to Viśvambhara.<sup>3</sup> All the biographers, except Locanādāsa, agree that Viśvambhara was the tenth and the last child of Śacī and Jagannātha. Locana's<sup>4</sup> description appears to be based on the Kṛṣṇa legend since Kṛṣṇa was the eighth born child so was Viśvambhara, who has been depicted as Kṛṣṇa Himself.

#### NAME-GIVING CEREMONY

All the biographers agree that the last child born to Śacī and Jagannātha, was named Viśvambhara Misra. Murāri Gupta<sup>5</sup> and Kavikarṇapūra<sup>6</sup> say that it was Jagannātha Misra who named the child Viśvambhara whereas Vṛndāvanādāsa writes that the scholars of the city said that only

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1. Ibid., 5.

2. Ibid., 6-8.

3. Ibid., i.5.17-22.

4. Locanādāsa, p. 37.

5. Kaṭhā, i.6.3.

6. Mahākāvya, 2.62.

one name befitted him; at his birth famine had ceased all over the country, and the cultivators had plenty of rain; therefore, he should be named Viśvambhara, the supporter of the Universe, like Viṣṇu Himself.<sup>1</sup>

Vṛndāvanadāsa<sup>2</sup> previously records that at the name-giving ceremony the ladies of the neighbourhood said to one another that as the couple had lost many children and he was their last birth, he should be named Nemāi.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja<sup>3</sup> writes that the child's delight, when he heard the sweet sound of Harināma, led the ladies of the neighbourhood to call him "Gaurō Hari". Kṛṣṇadāsa<sup>4</sup> also records that Sītā Thākuraṇī, the wife of Advaita Ācāryya, a profound scholar, came to bless the new born baby with many presents. She blessed the child and named him Nemāi to protect him from evil spirits and witchcraft. Kṛṣṇadāsa<sup>5</sup> again writes that Jagannātha's father-in-law Nīlāmbhara

1. C-bhāṭi, IV, 47-49.

2. Ibid., 44-45.

3. C-C Ādi, XIII, 22-23.

4. Ibid., 110-116.

5. C-C Ādi, XIV, 15-16.

Cakra~~va~~rti<sup>u</sup> named the child Viśvambhara because he would support and <sup>u</sup>no<sup>k</sup>rish the whole Universe.

Thus we get three names of the child at this stage, his formal name is Viśvambhara and his nick<sup>(u)</sup>names are Gaura-Hari or Gaura or ~~G~~aurāṅga. It is needless to argue about who actually named him, since it is still the general practice in Bengal that the neighbours, the relatives or the parents name a child.

The biographers agree that Viśvambhara was born at the most favourable moment of planetary conjunctions. It appears this hearsay led Vṛndāvanadāsa to write that Nīlāmbhara Cakra~~va~~rti<sup>u</sup>, the maternal grand-father of Viśvambhara read wonderful presages in Viśvambhara's horoscope. He read that Viśvambhara's birth was marked by the sign of King of Kings; that he would grow wiser than Vṛhaspati; that he was Nārāyaṇa and that he would plant faith in every direction. Nīlāmbhara omitted the reference to their son's turning Sannyāsī.<sup>1</sup> Vṛndāvanadāsa's record, however, seems imaginary, devised by the poet with his lord's later career in view.

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1. C-bhāṭi, III, 9-28.

## THE DATE OF HIS BIRTH

All the biographers agree that ŚrīKṛṣṇa Caitanya was born in the full-moon night of Phālguna of Śaka 1407, i.e. 27th February, A.D. 1486.<sup>1</sup>

## VIŚVAMBHARA'S CHILDHOOD

### A. The evidence

#### I. Murāri Gupta's Version

Murāri's account begins with a description of the delight and joy of Jagannātha and his wife,<sup>2</sup> Śacī Devī, in their infant son, Viśvambhara.

Viśvambhara was a high-spirited and mischievous child. He used to creep upon older children and tickle them with twigs; sometimes he would break his mother's earthen cooking pots; and once he even stole part of a meal prepared by a Brahmin guest of his father's. The Brahmin made light of it, however, remarking that Viśvambhara's mischievousness reminded him of the infant

1. For the date of birth of Caitanya see B. Majumdar's Caitanya caritaṃ upādhana, op. cit., pp. 17-21.

2. Kaṇḍā, i.6.1.

Kṛṣṇa.<sup>1</sup>

Whenever she was cross with him, Śacī Devī used to bind him with cords, as Yaśodā did to the infant Kṛṣṇa. On one such occasion the enraged Viśvambhara ran away and sat down on the rubbish heap, from which Śacī Devī was afraid to dislodge him for fear of losing her ritual purity. She urged Viśvambhara to <sup>go and</sup> ~~to~~ wash so that she could pick him up; whereupon Viśvambhara explained that states of purity and impurity were equally illusory, as indeed was all else in the universe with the exception of Parameśvara, the Supreme Lord. Śacī forcibly dislodged him and took him to bathe in the Svarnā river.

When Viśvambhara sat on the rubbish heap on another occasion, the exasperated Śacī Devī scolded him severely. Viśvambhara threw a brick-bat at her face and she swooned. Neighbouring house-wives rushed to the scene and sprinkled her with water to help her to regain consciousness. Viśvambhara cried out 'Mother! Mother!' and caressed her face. When she came to, Śacī Devī took Viśvambhara in her arms and one of the ladies teased him, saying, 'Go and fetch a couple of cocoa-nuts for your mother. They'll do her good'. Viśvambhara got

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1. Ibid., 8-11.

up and left immediately and, when to their great surprise he returned with two green cocoa-nuts, they asked him from where he had got them but he merely emitted a ~~hūṅkāra~~ (a growl) at them.<sup>1</sup>

One day Śacī Devī was lying resting with her son, when she became aware of a large assembly in the house. She told Viśvambhara to go to his father's room. On the way the gods paid homage to him. His parents distinctly heard the tinkle of anklets as he walked, even though he was not wearing any.<sup>2</sup>

Viśvambhara went out to play at every opportunity. He was constantly covered in dust and neglected both his meals and his books to be with his playmates. His father used to scold him, but one day a Brāhmaṇa appeared to Jagannātha in a dream and admonished him, saying, 'You have no proper respect for your son. You're like an animal adorned with precious stones. You have no appreciation of their value'. Jagannātha countered: 'Even if my son were Nārāyaṇa Himself, it would still be my duty to discipline him'. When Jagannātha divulged his dream

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1. Kaṭhā i.6.12-30.

2. Kaṭhā i.6.32-35.



to others, they expressed great delight in it.<sup>1</sup>

One day Viśvambhara advised his mother to fast on ekādaśī (the eleventh day of the lunar fortnight), and thereafter she did so.<sup>2</sup>

Once, when about to chew betelnut, Viśvambhara asked his mother to look after his senseless body <sup>from</sup> which he was about to depart for a moment. He then chewed the betel-nut and fainted, falling to the ground 'like a staff'. Śacī Devī anxiously bathed his face <sup>with</sup> ~~in~~ Ganges water till he recovered.<sup>3</sup>

## II. Kavikarṇapūra's Testimony

Kavikarṇapūra's version of Viśvambhara's childhood closely follows that of Murāri Gupta with the exception of the incident of the Brāhmaṇa's meal.<sup>4</sup>

## III. Vṛndavanadāsa's Testimony

Once, while crawling on all fours, Viśvambhara came upon a snake and lay upon it. The neighbours were

1. Ibid., 1.7.12-17.

2. Ibid., 19-20.

3. Maṇu 1.7.21-23.

4. Maṇu, 11.59-113.

greatly alarmed; Śacī Devī and Jagannātha wept helplessly, but the snake finally left without incident.<sup>1</sup>

Once, when wearing valuable jewellery, Viśvanbhara got lost in Navadvīpa. Two thieves saw him and picked him up, claiming to be relatives. One addressed him as "my child" and the other exclaimed: "Where have you been"; as if he had been looking for him. "Come along", they said; and one of them gave him a sweet, whilst the other said soothingly: "We'll soon be home now". Viśvanbhara assented to go with them. As they went along, the thieves began mentally dividing their spoils. As God incarnate, Viśvanbhara knew what they were thinking and was highly amused.

In the meantime, Viśvanbhara's relatives had become anxious for his safety and began calling his name and searching the street for him.

By the power of Lord Viṣṇu, the thieves lost their way and by chance came to the house of Jagannātha Miśra. They put him down and were about to rob him, when he dashed into the arms of his father. Having carried Lord Viṣṇu even by accident, the two thieves were blessed with divine grace. Viśvanbhara did not

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1. C-bhāṭī; IV, 67-75.

betray them when asked by his father where he'd been. He merely said that he had got lost while playing by the Ganges and had been brought home by two men. Jagannātha made it known that he would reward the two men, if they would come forward. But no one did so. The local people took the incident as proof of the truth of the scriptures, which stated that providence protected the defenceless: children and the old and the infirm.<sup>1</sup>

Jagannātha once asked Viśvambhara to fetch some books from the inner apartment for him. When Viśvambhara did so, Jagannātha and Śacī Devī were convinced that they heard the tinkling of anklets, even though Viśvambhara wore none. Then Viśvambhara went out to play, and his parents went into the inner apartments to investigate this phenomenon. They discovered strange foot-prints. Assuming that these foot-prints and the sound of anklets were due to the household God Dānōdara, they worshipped the Śalagrāma.<sup>2</sup>

A Brāhmaṇa once came to stay at Jagannātha Misra's house. The Brāhmaṇa was well versed in philosophy and fond of going on pilgrimage. He prepared a meal

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1. C-bhāṭi, IV, 108-139.

2. Ibid., V, 3-15.

and was about to offer it to Lord Kṛṣṇa, when in came Viśvanbhara and helped himself to some. The Brāhmaṇa cried out that the child had touched the food.

The ladies of the neighbourhood pointed out to Viśvanbhara that by eating the food he might have lost his ritual purity, as he had no idea of the Brāhmaṇa's caste. Viśvanbhara merely laughed, arguing that as a cow-keeper (Gopāla) he couldn't possibly lose ritual purity by eating food prepared by a Brāhmaṇa.

A little while later the Brāhmaṇa prepared another meal, but before he could offer it to Lord Kṛṣṇa, Viśvanbhara again came in and took some of it. Jagannātha told the Brāhmaṇa that next time he would prevent Viśvanbhara taking any. When the third meal was ready, Viśvanbhara turned up again. The whole household was now asleep. Viśvanbhara produced an eight-armed Theophany. Four of the arms held the conch-shell, discus, club and lotus, two held butter which he was in the act of eating, and two held the flute which he was playing. Viśvanbhara told the Brāhmaṇa that he was pleased with him and that he had descended to propagate Samkīrtana throughout the world. He also explained his connection with the Vṛndāvana-Līlā. Finally he commanded the Brāhmaṇa not to divulge what he had told

him. The Brāhmaṇa was overwhelmed with delight.<sup>1</sup>

One day Viśvambhara mentioned that he wanted to taste food prepared by Jagadīśa and Hiranya, two citizens of Navadvīpa, for Lord Viṣṇu on the eleventh day of the lunar fortnight. The news came as a surprise to them and they assumed that there must be something superhuman about Viśvambhara for him to express such a desire. They wondered how he knew that they were preparing food for Lord Viṣṇu. In wonder they consented to give him some of the food.<sup>2</sup>

Vṛndāvanadāsa significantly omits all mention of the brickbat incident narrated by Murāri Gupta.

#### IV. Jayānanda's Testimony

When playing with his friends in a temple courtyard, Viśvambhara once threw a brickbat at his mother. It struck her on the cheek, and caused bleeding. She fainted. He advised her to repeat the name of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, adding that human-life was but a dream. He then gave her a Tulsi-leaf. Maid servants splashed

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1. C-bhāṭi, V, 17-153.

2. C-bhāṭi, V, 20-33.

her face with water and she came to.<sup>1</sup>

Jayānanda repeats the incident narrated by Murāri, where Viśvambhara spouts philosophy from a rubbish heap.<sup>2</sup>

One day, while cooking, Śacī Devī heard the tinkle of anklets from the yard where Viśvambhara was playing with a peacock's fan fastened to his head and a garland of Guñja flowers round his neck. Viśvambhara's foster mother, Nārāyaṇī heard the sound and privately informed Srīvāsa of it.<sup>3</sup>

A white snake once reared up over Viśvambhara, while he lay sleeping.<sup>4</sup>

#### V. Kṛṣṇadāsa Tāvirāja's Testimony

Once Viśvambhara awoke and began to cry, Śacī Devī his mother took him in her arms and suckled him. She noticed the marks on his feet: the flag, the thunderbolt, conch, discus and fish and drew Jagannātha Misra's attention to them. Jagannātha was delighted and summoned

1. Jayānanda, p. 15.

2. Ibid., p. 16.

3. Jayananda, pp. 16-17.

4. Ibid., p. 17.

his father-in-law, Nīlāmbara Cakravartī, who came and examined them; and declared that from the conjunction of the planets at the time of Viśvambhara's birth he had known that the child would possess 32 marks which would distinguish him as a mahāpuruṣa and had recorded the fact in his horoscope. He added that Viśvambhara bore on his hands and feet the marks of Lord Viṣṇu: his mission was to save mankind, by the propagation of Vaiṣṇavism.<sup>1</sup>

In time Viśvambhara learnt to crawl. Whilst at this stage he sometimes cried, but the recitation of Hari's name instantly pacified him. The sound of Hari-nāma invariably brought a smile to his lips.<sup>2</sup>

Soon he learnt to walk and began playing with other children.<sup>3</sup> Once his mother gave him a plate of fried paddy and sweets to eat and then got on with her house-work, but the child began eating earth. Śacī Devī saw him and dashed back to him in alarm. She took the earth from him and asked him why he was eating it. Viśvambhara replied that she had no reason to scold him,

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1. C-C Ādi, XIV, 5-13.

2. Ibid., 18-19.

3. Ibid., 20.

since she herself had given him earth to eat. After all, he argued, what were paddy and sweets but another form of earth? Indeed, there was nothing which was not essentially earth: our very bodies and all our possessions were of this one essence.

Taken aback at the profundity of his remarks, Sacī asked Viśvambhara who had taught him all this. Without waiting for an answer, however, she pointed out that even if his arguments were correct, nevertheless eating earth was bad for him: it was likely to result in disease, and it was certain to result in loss of weight. She then went on to say that though both a pot and a lump of earth may be of the same essence, they possessed different properties: a pot would store water; a lump of earth merely absorbed it (implying, of course, that the properties of food and earth also differed in a similar manner).

Viśvambhara replied that his mother ought to have pointed out these differences earlier. Henceforth he would cease eating earth and take suck instead, when he was hungry. So saying, he commenced taking suck. Viśvambhara had allowed himself to be defeated in argument



in order to conceal his godhead.<sup>1</sup>

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, then repeats the incidents of the Brāhmaṇa's meal,<sup>2</sup> the tricking of the thieves,<sup>3</sup> and the eating of the food prepared by Jagadīśa and Hiraṇya on ekādaśī.<sup>4</sup>

Viśvambhara used to go in other peoples' houses with his playmates to steal food. He ate the food and hit the other children. The children complained to his mother, who scolded him and asked him why he behaved in this manner. One would think from his behaviour that they had no food in the house. Whereupon Viśvambhara threw a tantrum and smashed his mother's earthen pots. His mother took him in her arms, and tried to comfort him, but Viśvambhara slapped her. Śacī Devī fainted. He began to weep at the sight of his unconscious mother. The women told him to go and fetch some cocoa-nuts to bring her round, but were surprised when he managed to do so.<sup>5</sup>

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1. C-C Ādi, XIV, 21-31.

2. Ibid., 34.

3. Ibid., 35.

4. Ibid., 36.

5. Ibid., 37-44.

Once Viśvambhara and his companions went to bathe in the Ganges. There were some young girls there worshipping at shrines on the river's edge. Viśvambhara commanded them to worship him, promising to grant them a boon, and adding that Gaṅgā, Durgā, and Maheśvara were all his attendants. He then anointed himself with sandal paste, garlanded himself with flowers and forcibly ensured that their offerings went to him - for he snatched them from their hands - and ate them.<sup>1</sup>

### Discussion

#### Viśvambhara's Crawling on all fours

Murāri Gupta and, following him, Kavikarṇapūra write that Viśvambhara's parents were delighted to see him crawling on all fours. Vṛndāvanadāsa also describes this but he adds a miraculous story on the basis of a Kṛṣṇa legend. According to Vṛndāvanadāsa Viśvambhara, when crawling, lay upon a cobra. We have a similar story in the career of Lord Kṛṣṇa, on which this episode is evidently modelled. Vṛndāvanadāsa was inclined to depict Viśvambhara as Kṛṣṇa Himself, and the following story is a further example of this tendency.

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1. C-C Ādi, XIV, 45-48.

Jayānanda, who repeats several of Vṛndāvanadāsa's miraculous episodes also incorporated this snake story into his account. According to Jayānanda the snake was white and stood like a staff beside Viśvambhara.

Murāri Gupta, Kavikarṇapūra, Lacana and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja do not tell this story of the snake. Kṛṣṇadāsa admits that he based Viśvambhara's Navadvīpa-Īlā mostly on Vṛndāvanadāsa. If this legend had been widely believed at the time Kṛṣṇadāsa would obviously have mentioned it. Bengal is well-known for snakes and it is not unlikely that Viśvambhara as a child had an experience with a snake but the story as it stands is evidently based on an earlier legend.

#### Viśvambhara and a Brāhmaṇa guest

Murāri Gupta's account with reference to the Brāhmaṇa guest, merely implies that the Brāhmaṇa remembered the sports of the infant Kṛṣṇa when the child Viśvambhara touched and ate the cooked food prepared by the Brāhmaṇa.

All the biographers except Vṛndāvanadāsa and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja ignore this story. Kṛṣṇadāsa, following Vṛndāvana merely mentions this Brāhmaṇa guest. Vṛndāvana expands the same idea as recounted by Murāri and adds to

it from his personal imagination. He attributed to the Brāhmaṇa guest ~~in~~ the form of an eight-armed deity whereas Murāri Gupta is silent about this supernatural power of Viśvambhara. There is moreover a contradiction in the description of the incident. How was it possible for Vṛndāvana to know of the manifestation of Viśvambhara if the latter asked the Brāhmaṇa not to disclose his identity?

We need not believe any part of this story except that on one occasion the infant Viśvambhara showed very precocious piety in the presence of a Brāhmaṇa visitor.

His philosophical advice to his mother sitting on a rubbish heap; he strikes his mother with a brick-bat, he brings two cocoa-nuts

All the biographers agree that Viśvambhara gave his mother philosophical advice while sitting on a rubbish heap. Murāri Gupta, Kavikarnapūra and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja agree that the neighbours used to complain against Viśvambhara's conduct towards his mother, who on one such occasion wanted to restrain him, but Viśvambhara ran away and sat on a rubbish heap so that she might not touch him. Viśvambhara gave religious advice

to his mother while sitting on the rubbish heap. Vṛndāvanadāsa differs from Murāri and Kavikarṇapūra in the description of the above incident. According to Vṛndāvanadāsa the real purpose of Viśvambhara's action, was to gain permission to resume his study, because Jagannātha had asked him not to study as Viśvarūpa's Sannyāsa had caused a great shock to Jagannātha and he believed that education was responsible for his son's turning into a Sannyāsī, and he feared that Viśvambhara would follow in his brother's foot-steps if in fact he was allowed to study. Vṛndāvana's Viśvambhara sitting on the rubbish, asked how he could distinguish pure and impure if he was not allowed to study, since study was the source of knowledge.

Jayānanda ignores all these descriptions. According to him Viśvambhara used to play with the children on the banks of the Ganges for hours together, and on one such occasion Śacī went to the Ganges and tried to bring home her son but the latter ran away and sat on a rubbish heap on the way, from where he philosophically advised his mother.

Murāri Gupta, Kavikarṇapūra and Locana agree that Viśvambhara, when sitting on a rubbish heap, threw a brick-bat at his mother. Śacī fainted as a result

of this blow, whereupon the ladies of the neighbourhood asked Viśvambhara to bring two cocoa-nuts in order to bring her round from her fainting fit with their water. He brought the two cocoa-nuts, to the surprise of the ladies.

The account of Viśvambhara throwing a brick-bat at his mother has not been recorded by Vṛndāvanadāsa. Vṛndāvana also ignores the story of the cocoa-nuts. We have already shown that Vṛndāvana wants to depict Viśvambhara as Kṛṣṇa Himself. Therefore, what was possible for the infant Kṛṣṇa was also possible for the child Viśvambhara. The infant Kṛṣṇa, though naughty, did not go so far as to hit his mother; therefore, Viśvambhara could not hit his mother. The omission of this episode strongly suggests that on one such occasion Viśvambhara really did hit his mother, for it is not the sort of story which a hagiographer would invent in order to glorify his Lord.

Jayānanda and Kṛṣṇadāsa agree that Viśvambhara struck Śacī, but they differ in the description of the incident. According to Jayānanda Viśvambhara, when playing in a court of a temple, threw a brick-bat at his mother. Kṛṣṇadāsa writes that Viśvambhara hit Śacī when he was on her lap; following Murāri Gupta, Kṛṣṇadāsa also writes

that Viśvambhara brought two cocoq-nuts to revive his mother.

It is not unlikely that Viśvambhara as a child gave his mother philosophical advice since we know that the child belonged to a pious and educated Vaiṣṇava family; it was obvious that Jagannātha and Śacī discoursed on religious points, and perhaps their conversation influenced Viśvambhara even when he was still a child. Thus as a precocious child his conduct was different from that of other children.

We need not be surprised when we see that Viśvambhara brought two cocoq-nuts. Most of the householders of Bengal possessed orchards where there was no scarcity of cocoq-nut trees; these may bear fruit all through the year, and the householders generally stored them to quench their thirst. It is not unlikely that Viśvambhara brought two cocoq-nuts from the cocoq-nut store room.

### His Manifestations

According to Murāri, Kavikarṇapūra, Locana and Kṛṣṇadāsa, one night Śacī believed that strangers were in her room and ordered Viśvambhara to go to his

father's apartment. Viśvambhara was worshipped by the supernatural visitors on his way to the apartment, and the parents heard the sound of anklets from his bare feet. Vṛndāvana differs in the description of the above incident. According to him the parents heard the sound of anklets when Viśvambhara stepped towards the inner apartment to fetch books for his father. The couple afterwards discovered remarkable foot-prints on the floor. They thought that the sound of anklets and the foot-prints were made by their God the Śālagrāma. Murāri Gupta and Kavikarṇapūra do not mention the incident of the foot-prints. Vṛndāvana perhaps wrote this from his personal imagination in order to represent Viśvambhara as the Bhāgavat incarnate.

Jayānanda, on the other hand, differs from the above biographers. According to him it was Śacī and Viśvambhara's foster-mother Nārāyaṇī, who heard the sound of anklets from the yard when Viśvambhara was playing. Nārāyaṇī has not been recorded as a foster-mother of Viśvambhara by any other biographer. We know that Nārāyaṇī was the mother of Vṛndāvana and the latter specially mentions that his mother was only four years old just a few months before Viśvambhara accepted monkhood. We have no reason to believe this part of the story since



Vṛndāvana evidently knew better than Jayānanda about Nārāyaṇī. But the introduction of Nārāyaṇī as a foster-mother of Viśvambhara leads us to assume that Nārāyaṇī was a favourite disciple of Viśvambhara, and after the departure of the latter as a sannyāsī from Navadvīpa, Nārāyaṇī used to frequent Śacī and Viṣṇupriyā; she was counted as one of the relatives of the Mīśra family. It is likely that Jayānanda did not consider Nārāyaṇī's age when he depicted her as Viśvambhara's foster-mother.

We know that an affectionate mother is always anxious for the welfare of her child. We have already seen that Śacī had lost several of her children who died as infants. Only Viśvarūpa and Viśvambhara remained, and it is likely that she was most anxious for her youngest son Viśvambhara. It is possible that one night Śacī dreamt that celestial beings were worshipping her son Viśvambhara. She woke up and sent him to his father's apartment as if the child might be protected if he could stay with his father. However, it has been stated that the parents heard the sound of anklets from the bare feet of Viśvambhara. This experience might have been their personal imagination, told to Nārāyaṇī by Śacī long after the event, when Viśvambhara was already a famous Sannyāsī.

### Jagannātha's dream

Murāri and Navikarnapūra write that one night a Brāhmaṇa appeared to Jagannātha in a dream. He was told by the Brāhmaṇa that his son should not be treated like an ordinary child.

The story has been recorded by Locana, who adds features from his personal imagination to prove Viśvambhara's godhead. Locana's story implies that Viśvambhara appeared before Jagannātha in his dream in the guise of a Brāhmaṇa. Viśvambhara revealed himself as the Supreme Being and said that it was needless to punish him although he neglected his studies, since as God he knew all the Śāstras.

Kṛṣṇadāsa probably recorded this story on the basis of Murāri but, unlike Murāri, he mentions that the brāhmaṇa disclosed to Jagannātha that Viśvambhara was God Himself.

Vṛndāvana and Jayānanda ignore this story. It is to be assumed that Jagannātha Miśra was anxious about Viśvambhara's education and health since Viśvarūpa had left home after becoming a Sannyāsī. It was his paternal duty to discipline his son, specially when Viśvambhara used to play, neglecting his daily meals

and study. It is likely that on one such occasion Jagannātha punished his son. The dream might be a psychological reaction after beating his most affectionate son and the dream recorded by Murāri may well be based on reliable testimony, since Murāri knew Jagannātha personally. The additional features of the other chroniclers are mere legendary embroidery.

He requests his mother not to eat on the Ekādaśī day.

Murāri, Kavikarnapūra and Kṛṣṇadāsa write that Viśvambhara one day requested his mother not to eat on the Ekādaśī day.

We need not ~~but~~ be surprised to hear of this from the mouth of a child like Viśvambhara because it was probable that Viśvambhara might have noticed that the ladies and specially the widows of the neighbourhood generally fasted on the day of Ekādaśī. It is a general practice among the widows to fast on the day of Ekādaśī. Even some ladies whose husbands are alive observe this fast as an act of ritual. Most of the neighbours of Jagannātha were pious Brāhmanas, and Viśvambhara might have requested his mother to fast when he understood that ~~as~~ the ladies observed the fast on the day of

Ekādaśī.

He chews betel-nut.

According to Murāri and Locana one day Viśvambhara chewed betel-nut and fainted. Lavidarnapūra also records the story, but he differs from Murāri in the description of the incident. According to Karnapūra betel-nut was offered to Viśvambhara but he fainted before taking it.

Uṣṇadāsa also records this story basing himself on Murāri; but he expands the incident by adding additional features from what he heard. According to him Viśvambhara had a vision of his brother Viśvarūpa in his unconscious state. There may yet be truth in it. Here we find Viśvambhara depicted as a child full of responsibility to his parents. The arguments of Viśvambhara with his brother, who wanted to take him away as a child Sannyāsī, shows that like other children he is also attached to his home.

Vṛndāvana and Jayānanda do not mention this incident.

It is likely that on one occasion Viśvambhara was offered betel-nut along with other fruits (as offerings

to God). The distribution of Prasāda among devotees is a general practice in Bengal. We know that fresh betel-nut contains an astringent juice. The child Viśvambhara may well have chewed it and this astringent may have temporarily paralysed his nerves. It is well known that the sensations even of certain adults are affected by Supārī. We have noticed that Kavikarnāpūra does not mention Viśvambhara as chewing betel-nut. Kavikarnāpūra's treatment of the child Viśvambhara is much more hagiographical than Murāri's, and he may well have omitted it because it was not consistent with his concept of an infant godhead. This very fact, and its comparative unimportance suggests that it may be true.

He casts the offerings to Lord Viṣṇu prepared by Jagadīśa and Hiranya.

No other biographer mentions this story but Vṛndavana and Kṛṣṇadāsa. Kṛṣṇadāsa based this story on Vṛndavana's Caitanya-Bhāgavata, but he merely mentions that on one occasion Viśvambhara on the pretence of sickness, ate the offerings to Lord Viṣṇu at the house of Hiranya and Jagadīśa.

It is likely that Vṛndavana invented this

story just to provide further evidence of Viśvambhara's godhead even as a child. It is unlikely that a ~~Brahman~~ boy, well trained in his traditional faith, would think of touching offerings to Gods and this, the silence of Murāri, and the fact that the story is clearly intended to prove Viśvambhara's godhead, lead us to disbelieve it.

### His restlessness.

The child Viśvambhara's claim to be Nārāyaṇa Himself as expressed to the bathers and the maidens may be true since he was fortunate enough to have enjoyed a religious background. Jagannātha Misra was a pious Vaiṣṇava, and no doubt discoursed on religious topics with the Vaiṣṇavas of Navadvīpa. The child Viśvambhara might learn all the Kṛṣṇa legends from their conversation and also from his mother who used to tell the <sup>o</sup>stories of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The description of Vṛndāvana states that even the maidens used to talk of the Kṛṣṇa legends. One day one of the girls complained to Śacī against Viśvambhara's prank which according to her, was similar to that of Lord Kṛṣṇa of Vṛndāvana.<sup>1</sup> Another girl complained

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1. C-bhāṭī, VI, 80.

to Śacī that Viśvambhara proposed to marry her.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that the high-spirited boy from time to time re-enacted the episodes of the Kṛṣṇa legend with other children, as Indian children do to this day. And he would not ignore the pranks of the supernatural child of the legends, which he might well have believed in some measure to justify his own naughtiness.

The other episodes need not detain us since they are evidence of increasing emphasis upon the identification of Viśvambhara with Viṣṇu.

A mother is the best source of information about the childhood of her son. This is applicable to Śacī, the mother of the Saint Viśvambhara. The memory of Viśvambhara's infancy and childhood was recorded vividly in the mind of Śacī and these sweet memories stirred in her mind when her son Viśvambhara became the greatest spiritual force of the times. It is likely that people from different corners of India came to Śacī, who was famous as the mother of the Saint Viśvambhara and it is very probable that she disclosed to them memories of Viśvambhara's childhood. It is not unlikely that Śacī found something different in the child Viśvam-

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1. Ibid.; Ādi, VI, 78.

bhara since a mother thinks that her child is quite different from others. We have no reason to doubt her sincerity. She was proud of her venerable son, who bore so famous a name and had an epoch-making career. Narahari, Vāsudeva and his two brothers, Murāri Gadādhara, Nārāyaṇī and Advaita Ācāryya lived in Navadvīpa and they witnessed several of Viśvambhara's Līlās. Śacī undoubtedly supplied them with the childhood episodes of Viśvambhara. We should not, however, sacrifice sympathy and understanding in evaluating her testimony. Thus we see that Śacī played the most vital part in transmitting the stories of the early life of Viśvambhara.

Although the hagiographers have largely modelled the early career of Viśvambhara on that of the child Kṛṣṇa yet there may have been some real foundation in the description of the legends. If we analyse them we see a child, who was precocious, intelligent, energetic, religious-minded with a heart full of fun.



### CHAPTER III

In this Chapter we shall review the evidence in the biographies <sup>concerning</sup> ~~butting~~ to Viśvambhara's first marriage to Lakṣmī Devī, his visit to East Bengal and his second marriage to Viṣṇu Priyā.

(i)

#### Viśvambhara's Marriage to Lakṣmī Devī.

##### a) The Evidence.

##### I. Murāri Gupta's Version.

Viśvambhara once went to visit Vanamālī Ācāryya. On his way home, he happened to see Lakṣmī Devī, the daughter of Vallabha Ācāryya. She was on her way to bathe in the Ganges with her friends. The Sanskrit idiom Murāri Gupta uses to describe the way Viśvambhara was attracted to Lakṣmī Devī 'she was born for me' is roughly equivalent to the English colloquialism: 'We were made for each other.' Viśvambhara went to the house of Vallabha Ācāryya along with his friends.

Presumably at the instigation of Viśvambhara,

Vanamālī, presumably a matchmaker, went to see Śacī Devī, Viśvambhara's mother, to broach the subject of marriage between Viśvambhara and Lakṣmī Devī. Śacī opposed the marriage on the grounds: first, she was a widow (and presumably could not afford the expense); second, Viśvambhara was too young to marry, and third, Viśvambhara's education was incomplete (and presumably, he could not support a wife). On his way home Vanamālī met Viśvambhara and told him the news. Thereupon Viśvambhara went to his mother and asked her what she had said to upset Vanamālī. He expressed regret that his mother could not have been agreeable to him. Śacī took the hint, sent for Vanamālī and told him to arrange the marriage.

Vanamālī then went to Vallabha Ācārya and formally proposed a marriage between Viśvambhara and Vallabha's daughter, Lakṣmī Devī. Vallabha welcomed the proposal, but said he had no dowry to offer. Vanamālī assured him that no dowry would be asked for. When he heard the news, Viśvambhara made the necessary arrangements for the wedding and at the auspicious moment the Adhiwāsa (ceremony on the eve of the wedding) was performed.

Śacī asked the barajātrī (the members of the bridegroom's party who escort him to the bride's home) to help her to make a success of the wedding, since she

was a widow (whose finances were presumably limited). This saddened Viśvambhara and he declared, 'O mother, am I so poor that you should make such a request? You ask for the assistance of others, because my father is dead. We could afford to give three plates of areca-nuts and betel leaves and perfume to each guest, if we so wished, for I possess supernatural power. But I choose to conduct myself like an ordinary mortal'. The wedding ceremony was duly performed in the home of the bride's father, Vallabha Ācāryya<sup>1</sup>

## II. Kavikarṇa Pūra's Version.

Kavikarṇa Pūra's account agrees with that of Murāri Gupta in the description of the above incident.

## III. Vṛndavanadāsa's Version.

One day Viśvambhara happened to see Lakṣmī Devī on the way to the Ganges to bathe. He recognised her as his eternal consort, as Lakṣmī is the eternal consort of Viṣṇu. There and then he declared his love for her and she responded in like fashion. That very day Vanamālī broached the subject of their marriage to

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1. ~~Kaṭacā~~, i.9.5-38, i.10.

Śacī Devī, who consented. When the wedding was concluded Śacī Devī's room was flooded with supernatural light and pervaded with the fragrance of water lilies, and poverty left her home, by which she realised that Lakṣmī Devī was indeed Lakṣmī Herself, the eternal consort of Viṣṇu.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. Jayānanda's Version

One day Viśvambhara discovered Lakṣmī Devī on the banks of the Ganges praying to Lord Śiva that Viśvambhara might be granted to her as a husband. When she opened her eyes, there stood Viśvambhara before her. 'Have no fear', said Viśvambhara, 'God will fulfil your desire, Go home. We shall be married this very month'.

On the way home Viśvambhara met Vanamālī, whom he informed of an understanding between his father, Jagannātha Miśra, and Lakṣmī Devī's father, Purandara Ācārya,<sup>2</sup> that Viśvambhara should marry Lakṣmī Devī. He then asked Vanamālī to propose the match to Purandara Ācārya. Vanamālī did so, and Purandara agreed. Purandara's wife then went to propose the match to Śacī Devī. In doing so, she told Śacī Devī how Purandara used to tease his daughter Lakṣmī, by asking her what type of man she

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1. C-bhāṭi, X, 50-127.

2. Purandara Ācārya may well be an assumed name of Vallabha Ācārya.

would like to marry. Lakṣmī Devī's <sup>in</sup>variable reply was: 'A man whose curling hair was decked with bakula flowers, who jested with Priests and scholars, whose tall figure was adorned with Sandal-Paste, who danced and chanted Hari's name, whose eyes innudated his body with tears of love as he danced'. But nowadays, Purandara's wife continued, when asked the same question by her father, Lakṣmī merely bowed her head in silent shyness. Whereupon Śacī Devī gave her consent to the match.

The wedding ceremony was attended by hundreds of ladies, whose husbands did not accompany them. On seeing Viśvambhara one of the ladies declared that she felt so consumed with hopeless passion for him that she would drown herself in the Ganges.<sup>1</sup>

#### V. Locana Dāsa's Version.

One day Viśvambhara and Vanamālī met Lakṣmī Devī. Viśvambhara's eyes never left Lakṣmī Devī, nor did a smile leave his lips, whilst she was there. Neither Lakṣmī Devī nor Vanamālī could fail to perceive what was in Viśvambhara's mind.

Locana reports that the wedding was attended

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1. Jayānanda, pp. 40-46.

by thousands of Brāhmaṇa ladies, breaking their vratas.<sup>1</sup>  
 This may either mean that they gave up the vrata ceremonies in which they were engaged in order to attend, or that they were unfaithful to their husbands in their hearts. The description suggests that the latter reason is plausible in view of their behaviour. They could not control themselves and gazed at him openly with passion.

#### VI. Kṛṣṇadāsa's Version.

Kṛṣṇadāsa's description of Viśvambhara's marriage with Lakṣmī Devī follows Vṛndābaradāsa's except that according to him at her tender age Lakṣmī Devī, the daughter of Vallabha Ācārya went to the Ganges to worship the deities. She and Viśvambhara met, and they fell in love. Viśvambhara told her that he was the supreme God and asked her to worship him, in order that she might attain her heart's desire. Accordingly, she strewed him with flowers and anointed him with sandal paste, finally bowing before him to present him with a jasmine garland.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Locanadāsa, pp. 59-67.

2. C-C Ādi, XIV, 59-65. XV, 25-27.

b) Discussion.

Murāri Gupta's Version.

Murāri's account comprises the following events:

1. Viśvambhara fell in love with Lakṣmī Devī at first sight and arranged that a formal proposal of marriage should be made.
2. Śacī Devī at first rejected the proposal on practical grounds: first, Viśvambhara's immaturity; and second, their inability to support a wife for Viśvambhara, since Śacī Devī was a widow and Viśvambhara still a student.
3. Śacī Devī later consented when she saw how eager Viśvambhara was to marry Lakṣmī Devī.
4. Vallabha Ācāryya, the bride's father, was unable to offer a dowry.
5. The wedding took place. It was a modest affair owing to the limited means of both families. Viśvambhara reproved Śacī Devī for mentioning their poverty, claiming that as a divine being he could have had a much more sumptuous wedding, if he had so wished.

This scheme of events accords with the normal pattern of events in a Bengali wedding. It is all

entirely plausible, except for Viśvambhara's reproof of his mother. But even this is plausible to some extent. Bengali bridegrooms do not make a point of claiming to be <sup>supernatural</sup> beings, but they are generally touchy about <sup>supernatural</sup> social status. Coming from the mouth of a <sup>supernatural</sup> being the reproof sounds all too human and petty, especially as Sacī Devī's remarks about the family circumstances are entirely conventional and would probably have been made, even if their circumstances had been affluent. We are therefore prepared to accept that at his wedding Viśvambhara uttered some touchy remark about his status, but not that he claimed to be God incarnate.

The respective roles of Viśvambhara and Lakṣmī Devī should be noted: the initiative throughout comes from Viśvambhara, and it is entirely natural that it should have done; Lakṣmī Devī's role is entirely passive, we are not even told whether she approved of her suitor or not, and this at the time was also entirely natural or at least regarded as such..

## II. Kavikarṇapūra's Version.

Kavikarṇapūra's version corroborates that of Murāri.



### III. Vṛndāvanadāsa's Version.

The scheme of events remains substantially the same, but there is a significant change in the character and roles of Viśvambhara and Lakṣmī Devī. Both appear to be accorded <sup>supernatural</sup> status as Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī. Śacī Devī is convinced of Lakṣmī's divine status by a supernatural event and a marked improvement in the family's economic position. Lakṣmī Devī's role is not passive: she declares her love for Viśvambhara.

We would suggest that the <sup>supernatural</sup> accordance of ~~status~~ status to Viśvambhara and Lakṣmī Devī is merely an expression of opinion on Vṛndāvanadāsa's part; i.e. it does not constitute evidence, and can therefore be disregarded. The supernatural event referred to may be subjectively true. Śacī Devī may actually have experienced some such hallucination or have convinced herself that she had in later years, when recalling Viśvambhara's first marriage in the full knowledge of his later reputation. The improvement in economic circumstances was probably due to Viśvambhara's taking up teaching to support the family and also to the fact that Lakṣmī proved to be a competent and thrifty housewife. It is a commonplace of Indian thought and literature to identify such a housewife with Lakṣmī, as a compliment to her efficiency. We

would interpret Śacī Devī's praise of Lakṣmī Devī in the light of this convention.

Lakṣmī Devī's declaration of love for Viśvambhara is not without importance. We may accept that young women did make such declarations, when assured of the love of their suitors. It is therefore possible that the marriage did result from a type of romantic love, which was fast losing favour in orthodox society at the time and was soon to become almost impossible. If the marriage did, in fact, result from such romantic love, then this merely adds to our picture of Viśvambhara as a remarkably personable young man, who was likely to make a profound impression on members of either sex at first sight.

#### IV. Jayānanda's Version.

We can accept only one item of Jayānanda's testimony as plausible: the understanding between Jagannātha Miśra and Purandara Ācārya that Viśvambhara should marry Lakṣmī Devī. Such understandings are common between close friends, and are often honoured even when, as in this case, one of the parties to the agreement has since died.

In the light of such an understanding, which

would of course have become known to Lakṣmī Devī, her declaration of love for Viśvambhara becomes even more natural and all possibility of charging her with immodest conduct ceases.

But if such an understanding did exist, it becomes difficult to understand why Lakṣmī Devī should have felt it necessary to pray that Viśvambhara should be granted her as a husband. We know that Pārvatī prayed to obtain Śiva as her Lord, and can only assume that Jayānanda deliberately fashioned his material on this model so as to make his heroine behave in accordance with his conception of divinity. We would therefore suggest that Lakṣmī's behaviour on the banks of the Ganges is a deliberate fabrication on Jayānanda's part.

Similarly we suggest that Lakṣmī's description of her future Lord should also be rejected: it implies that Lakṣmī Devī was able to foresee events beyond her own death, since in her lifetime Viśvambhara never performed saṅkīrtana.

Similarly we would also suggest that the final paragraph of Jayānanda's version be disregarded. All the evidence suggests that both Śacī Devī and Vallabha Ācāryas were poor. They could not have afforded to invite so many guests. Furthermore, Bengali ladies of

good family do not make a practice of attending social functions unescorted; and they certainly do not behave with the type of immodesty described by Jayānanda. The account of Jayānanda of the immodest behaviour of the respectable married ladies at Viśvambhara's wedding are evidently inspired by the tradition of the Gopīs in the Kṛṣṇa legend, and we need not believe them.

#### V. Locanadāsa's Version.

Locanadāsa's version confirms the general impression that Viśvambhara's marriage to Lakṣmī Devī was a love-match.

Locana imputes the same type of immodest conduct to Brāhmaṇa ladies as does Jayānanda. If these imputations have any significance it is this: Viśvambhara was so handsome, that even the most strait-laced of women were not proof against his devastating charms. Thus these imputations may be interpreted as an hyperbolic description of Viśvambhara's personableness.

#### VI. Kṛṣṇadāsa's Version.

Kṛṣṇadāsa's version strains our credulity to the utmost. His description of Lakṣmī's behaviour suggests that she either possessed a degree of gullibility,

that should have prompted her parents never to let her out of the house alone, or a simply marvellous sense of humour. No one, not even a young inexperienced girl, would take seriously a young man's statement that he was the Supreme God incarnate. This description tells us more about the simple piety of Kṛṣṇadāsa, than the character of this historical figure, Lakṣmī Devī. We suggest that it be disregarded.

An expert poet Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāga infused life into his account of the love of Viśvambhara and Lakṣmī Devī. Such innocent juvenile love affairs occur among the Bengali families even today, and there is nothing unnatural in the description. But we cannot ~~but~~ be surprised to see Viśvambhara reciting ślokas from the Bhāgavata since he might have learnt them from their superiors.

Nevertheless, Viśvambhara's meetings with Lakṣmī Devī have not been mentioned by any of his early biographers. Vṛndāvanadāsa is also silent in this respect although Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has based his account of Viśvambhara's Navadvīpa-piṇḍa mostly on Vṛndāvanadāsa. Therefore it is to be assumed that Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has based his account of the love between Viśvambhara and Lakṣmī Devī mainly on his personal imagination.

### General Conclusion.

All the biographers are agreed that Viśvam-bhara met and fell in love on the banks of the Ganges; and that they subsequently married.

Their meeting place was what one would have expected. People living near the Ganges would naturally go there to bathe every morning and it is only natural that a handsome lad and a pretty girl should begin to notice each other on their way to the Ganges, and perhaps fall in love.

It is also possible that there had been an understanding between their parents. This would make it even more natural that they should take an interest in each other on reaching marriageable age. It would also account for the fact that no dowry was demanded, and Vallabha Ācāryya's willingness to allow his daughter to marry a fatherless boy with no means of supporting her.

We therefore conclude that Viśvambhara's first marriage was fundamentally a love-match.

(ii)

Viśvambhara's visit to East Bengal and the death of  
Lakṣmī Devī.

a) The Evidence.

I. Murāri Gupta's Version.

Viśvambhara thus became a householder. Some time later he set out for East Bengal in the company of a few friends. His intention was to earn money by teaching. He stayed for a while on the banks of the Padmā, where he managed to attract some Brāhmaṇa pupils.

Meanwhile Lakṣmī Devī served his mother-in-law in Navadvīpa like an ideal Bengali wife. And Śacī Devī in her turn treated Lakṣmī like a daughter. Suddenly one day Lakṣmī was bitten on the foot by a snake. Śacī Devī summoned a snake charmer to remove the poison, but the charmer's mystical formulas failed and Lakṣmī died.

Viśvambhara returned to Navadvīpa laden with silver, gold and clothing and laid it all at his mother's feet. Śacī Devī was looking grief-stricken, and when Viśvambhara asked why, she told him of the death of his wife. The news pained him, but he managed not to break down. He even managed to say a few words of consolation to his mother, telling her of the transitoriness of

human life.<sup>1</sup>

## II. Vṛndāvanadāsa's Version.

Vṛndāvanadāsa gives no reason for Viśvambhara's visit to East Bengal. When he arrived in East Bengal, he was informed by the ~~Brāhmaṇas~~ there that they had been intending to come to Navadvīpa to study under him, but now thanks to the grace of God he had come to them instead. They compared him to Vṛhaspati, a part of God and an avatāra of Vṛhaspati. They stated that such scholarship as his could be attained by God alone, stating that they taught their students using his grammatical commentaries as their text-book, and that they would like to become his students and disciples, so that Viśvambhara's deeds might become immortal in those parts. Viśvambhara promised to comply with their requests and stayed there a few days.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile Lakṣmī was smitten with the pains of separation, but she did not disclose this to ~~any~~ one. Wishing to be reunited with her eternal consort, she

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1. Kaṇḍa, i.11.5-28., i.12:7-19.

2. C-bhāṭi XIV, 49-98.



died thinking of the feet of Viśvambhara.<sup>1</sup>

When Viśvambhara was about to leave East Bengal, a Brāhmaṇa named Tapana Miśra sought his assistance. This Tapana Miśra had relinquished all pleasure in life and was seeking salvation. He had had a dream in which a Brāhmaṇa had appeared to him, saying that he was to seek out Viśvambhara, who was God incarnate, and that He would be able to assist him. Commanding him to divulge his dream to nobody lest he should suffer in this life and the next, the Brāhmaṇa disappeared.

Viśvambhara advised him to chant Hari's name, as this was the only means of practising religion in this decadent age (kaliyuga). The advice satisfied Tapana, who expressed a desire to accompany Viśvambhara to Navadvīpa. Viśvambhara dissuaded him, promising that they would meet again if Tapana were to go to Benāres. So saying Viśvambhara embraced him, and thrilled with emotion. Tapana then disclosed his dream to Viśvambhara, who asked him not to divulge it to any one else.

Thus Viśvambhara blessed East Bengal and returned to Navadvīpa. When he arrived home with his

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1. C-bhāṭī, XIV, 99-104.

earnings, he was told of his wife's death by his neighbours.<sup>1</sup>

### III. Jayānanda's Version.

Viśvambhara on becoming a householder had to maintain his relatives and servants. In order to earn money he went to East Bengal. Viśvambhara gave Lakṣmī Devī his sacred thread and asked her to keep the dust touched by his feet. He told Śrīvāsa that he would convert the people of East Bengal to Vaiṣṇavism.

In his absence Lakṣmī Devī painted a portrait of Viśvambhara. She was sleeping with Śacī Devī when the time for her death came. A snake bit her on the small toe of her right foot, and she died. While Śacī was mourning the immature death of Lakṣmī Devī a celestial voice <sup>e</sup>fortold that Viṣṇupriyā would be the next wife of Viśvambhara; Viśvambhara would return from East Bengal in the next spring. The news of Viśvambhara's departure from East Bengal was received by the people of Navadvīpa, who sprinkled a thin solution of Sandal-paste on the streets, and decorated their courtyards to welcome Viśvambhara.

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1. C-bhāṭī, XIV, 116-178.

On his return Viśvambhara heard the news of his wife's death from the neighbours. He began to dance from emotion. He told his mother that this was a transitory world and only Kṛṣṇa was real; he said that he had earned money in order to support the family, but Lakṣmī, his wife, was somewhere else; therefore money was the root of all evils. He pacified his mother, saying that he would not go away and leave her alone at Navadvīpa.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. Locanadāsa's Version.

One day Viśvambhara suddenly decided to visit East Bengal for the good of the people of that land; since his touch would bless the river Padmā and people would realise that he was the Supreme Being. He spread Harināma amongst untouchables and beggars, thus releasing them from earthly life. He converted them by propagating Nāma-saṅkīrtana. He attracted numerous pupils, who under his tuition became scholars within a day, a fortnight, or a month. Viśvambhara's separation took the form of a snake which bit Lakṣmī Devī in the leg.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Jayānanda, pp. 47, 48, 50.

2. Locanadāsa pp. 70-73.

## V. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's Version.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja follows Vṛndavanadāsa in the description of the above incident.<sup>1</sup>

### b) Discussion.

#### I. Murāri Gupta's Version.

Thus from Murāri we learn two facts:

1. That Viśvambhara went to East Bengal to earn money by teaching and that he was to some extent successful in achieving his purpose, for he returned with silver and gold. Murāri's account of Viśvambhara's motives in making the journey is likely to be accurate, since it is what any young learned ~~Brāhmaṇa~~ might have done in the circumstances. His calm reaction to the news of his wife's death is also consistent with our knowledge of his character, and as Murāri knew Viśvambhara at the time he may well have had first-hand knowledge of the events.
2. That he did not break down at his wife's death.

#### II. Vṛndāvana's Version.

Vṛndāvana's version to some extent corroborates

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1. C-C Ādi, XVI, 6-21.

that of Murāri. He does not state the reason for Viśvambhara's visit but one infers from his account that it was in fact to teach; and Vṛndāvana later informs us that Viśvambhara returned to Navadvīpa with his earnings.

The remainder of Vṛndāvana's testimony is doubtful and to some extent self-contradictory. His testimony implies:

1. That Viśvambhara's grammatical commentary was so well known as to be a text-book in East Bengal.
2. That Viśvambhara's reputation as a scholar was so great that East Bengali Brāhmaṇas had been intending to travel to Navadvīpa to study under him.
3. That having met him, these same Brāhmaṇas were so impressed with his scholarship that they deemed him superhuman to have attained this knowledge.

All three implications must be exaggerations. If any one of them were true, it would have been unnecessary for Viśvambhara to leave Navadvīpa to attract students. Vṛndāvanadāsa already enlarges on the simple story to glorify his lord. His statement that Viśvambhara was already known in East Bengal as the author of a grammatical commentary is possible, since Viśvambhara was evidently an exceptionally able scholar, who had studied this subject among others, but it is surprising if this

Text written more than a year or two earlier, owing to Viśvambhara's tender age at the time, and new books circulated much more slowly in the days before printing. Moreover, no trace of the text survives.

Vṛndāvana's second paragraph is self-contradictory. If Lakṣmī disclosed to no one that fact that she was smitten with the pains of separation, then how did Vṛndāvana come to know of it?

The episode of Tapana Miśra contains the same type of self-contradictory statement. If Viśvambhara divulged Tapana's dream to no-one, then how did Vṛndāvana-dāsa come to know of it?

We would suggest that these doubtful, self-contradictory elements crept into Vṛndāvana's account owing to his indifference about chronology. In relating Viśvambhara's enthusiastic reception in East Bengal, Vṛndāvana obviously has in mind the type of reception Viśvambhara was accorded at later stages in his career, when he was not a householder and teacher, but a mystic and religious evangelist. The episode of Tapana Miśra belongs to this later period also.

### III. Jayānanda's Version.

Jayānanda similarly corroborates that Viśvambhara

went to East Bengal to earn money. He also implies that he returned to Navadvīpa with his earnings.

But the scheme of events of this period of Viśvambhara's life is submerged beneath Jayānanda's knowledge of what was to happen later. This is evident from Jayānanda's manner of narration. This appears, for instance, from the passage which follows:

"One day Lakṣmī Devī was sleeping with Śacī Devī, when her time for death came. A snake bit her on the little toe and she died".

This implies that Lakṣmī's death was predestined. The celestial voice informing Śacī Devī that Viśvambhara's next wife is to be Viṣṇupriyā is further evidence of Jayānanda's conviction that he is narrating a series of predestined events.

It is this conviction that probably led him to attribute to Viśvambhara a secondary purpose in visiting East Bengal. Since it was predestined that Viśvambhara was to become a religious evangelist, what could be more natural, to Jayānanda's way of thinking, than that before going to East Bengal Viśvambhara should promise to Śrīvāsa that he would convert the people of East Bengal to Vaiṣṇavism?

But Viśvambhara's own conversion to Vaiṣṇavism

did not occur till his visit to Gayā at about the age of 23, as we shall demonstrate in a later chapter. It is also possible that the second motive was attributed to him by Jayānanda simply because the mere earning of money seemed too mundane a motive for such a saintly figure. Thus Jayānanda's conviction that he was narrating a predestined series of events led him to lose his control over chronology of Viśvambhara's life.

This loss of control over chronology gave rise to the absurdity of his description of Viśvambhara's return. Would neighbours who were waiting to inform a man of the death of his beloved wife really decorate the streets to make of festivity of his return?

Jayānanda's description of Lakṣmī Devī painting a portrait of Viśvambhara to assuage her loneliness probably derives more from his knowledge of older literary convention than of Viśvambhara's life. It is the conventional behaviour of the proṣitapatika in Sanskrit literature.

#### IV. Locanadāsa's Version.

Locanadāsa corroborates that Viśvambhara went to earn money, but he also continues the trend set by



Vṛndāvana and Jayānanda of describing the visit in terms of Viśvambhara's later career. In Locana's account Viśvambhara is no longer a man but a full avatāra of Viṣṇu.

#### V. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's Version.

Kṛṣṇadāsa's account closely follows that of Locanadāsa. He states that Viśvambhara learnt of Lakṣmī's death by transcendental power while he was still in East Bengal.

#### General Discussion and Conclusion.

Stripped of its hagiographical accretions, the evidence we have of Viśvambhara's visit to East Bengal is meagre:

1. We are told that Viśvambhara went to East Bengal to earn money by teaching.
2. He returned with money and was told of his wife's death by either his mother or the neighbours.
3. He did not break down on hearing of his bereavement.
4. He had visited the banks of the Padmā.

The evidence is intriguing. The first item would tend to suggest that Viśvambhara was either desperate or had some other reason in visiting East Bengal. One

infers that he may have been desperate, because a newly married man would not leave his wife to earn money away from home, if he could have earned it at home. His motive in earning money in East Bengal may have been not only to support his family, but also to support the tol which he had established in Navadvīpa. But if he was not desperate for money, why should he choose to go to East Bengal? We know that his father had immigrated into Navadvīpa from Sylhet. Was he perhaps going to contact relatives, or to try to tap the same source of income his father had enjoyed before leaving Sylhet? But we do not know whether he went as far as Sylhet. We know only that he reached the banks of the Padmā. It is curious to note that the biographers are completely silent about the places visited by Viśvambhara in <sup>the</sup> course of his tour to East Bengal. It is possible that the biographers ~~were~~ inclined to record their Lord's spiritual activities and did not consider it worthwhile to record the name of the places visited by their Lord. Does not item 3 suggest another possibility? He did not weep at the news of his wife's death after a few months' separation. Had he perhaps ceased to miss her, and indeed even forgotten her during his short absence? Had he in fact gone away in the first place, not driven by economic necessity at

all, but by disappointment in marriage? Could it really have been true, as Vṛndābanadāsa suggests, that Viśvambhara was a brilliant scholar with a rapidly spreading reputation, who could easily have attracted students, even if he had stayed in Navadvīpa? Was it possible that the world-weariness that was eventually to lead to his sannyāsa was already upon him?

The evidence is insufficient to warrant any conclusions: it is merely sufficient to stimulate curiosity.

(iii)

### Viśvambhara's Marriage to Viṣṇupriyā.

#### a) The Evidence.

##### I. Murāri Gupta.

One day Sacī Devī told Kāśīnātha to go to Sanātana Miśra, the Rāja-Paṇḍita, with a formal proposal of marriage between Viśvambhara and the Rāja-Paṇḍita's daughter, Viṣṇupriyā. Kāśīnātha did so, and Sanātana agreed to the match. Sanātana then began to make the necessary arrangements for the wedding.

When the preparations were almost complete, news reached Sanātana that Viśvambhara did not wish to

marry again. The news greatly distressed Sanātana and his family. Viśvambhara heard of their distress and eventually consented to marry. The wedding was performed on an auspicious day.<sup>1</sup>

## II. Vṛndāvanadāsa's Version.

Śacī Devī wanted Viśvambhara to marry again. She began looking round for a suitable bride. One day she saw Viṣṇupriyā. She remembered seeing Viṣṇupriyā as a little child on the bathing steps of the Ganges. The child used to salute her respectfully. Śacī Devī decided that the girl might make an excellent wife for Viśvambhara.

The expense of the wedding was borne by two well-to-do citizens of Navadvīpa, Budhimanta Khāna and Mukunda Sañjaya. The wedding was performed with pomp and splendour.<sup>2</sup>

## III. Jayānanda's Version.

One day Sanātan Miśra realised that his daughter, Viṣṇupriyā, had reached the marriageable age. He sent for Kāśīnātha Miśra and asked him to choose a bridegroom

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1. Kaṭācā 1.13, 14.

2. C-bhūĀdi, XV, 38-155.

for her. Kāśīnātha dreamt that Viśvambhara should marry Viṣṇupriyā. Accordingly he told Sanātana to make a formal proposal to Śacī Devī, so that the marriage may be concluded that very month. Sanātana did so, and Śacī Devī gave her consent. The marriage ceremony was performed with great pomp.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. Locanadāsa's Version.

Sanātana Miśra and his wife were aware that Viśvambhara was the Supreme Being, and were delighted to have him as a son-in-law. The rest of Locana's account accords with that of Murāri.<sup>2</sup>

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja merely records that Viśvambhara married Viṣṇupriyā.<sup>3</sup>

#### General Discussion and Conclusion.

Three of the biographers state that the initiative for the marriage came from Śacī Devī: one, Jayānanda, that it came from Sanātana Miśra. Whichever is true, the significant point is that the initiative for

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1. Jayānanda pp. 50-54.

2. Locanadāsa pp. 73-80.

3. C-C Ādi, XVI, 23.

Viśvambhara's second marriage came from the parents of the bride or the groom.

Vṛndābanadāsa states that the expense of the marriage was borne by two rich men, which suggests that Sanātana Miśra was unable to afford the expense of marrying his daughter. This in turn would suggest that Sanātana had had difficulty in finding a bridegroom.

Murāri Gupta tells us that Viśvambhara was reluctant to marry again, and finally consented only when he learnt of the distress his reluctance was causing Sanātana and his family. The reasons for Viśvambhara's reluctance are not given. He may have been grieving for his first wife, Lakṣmī Devī. He may have been averse to marriage, having had one experience of it. Or he may have been reluctant to marry Viṣṇupriyā, because he was not attracted by her. The evidence is too sparse to warrant a conclusion.

All that can be concluded is that Viśvambhara's second marriage had been arranged and that he entered into it with reluctance.

## CHAPTER IV

### VIŚVAMBHARA AND THE VAISNAVA COMMUNITY IN NAVADVĪPA ; HIS EDUCATION AND HIS TOL.

In this chapter we shall consider Viśvambhara's relations with individual members of the Vaiṣṇava Community in Navadvīpa; his education and his tol prior to his visit to Gayā.

(i)

#### Viśvambhara and Śrīvāsa

##### a) The evidence.

##### 1. Vṛndāvanadāsa's version.

One day Viśvambhara found himself face to face with Śrīvāsa, who was presumably a friend of the family and a pious Vaiṣṇava. Viśvambhara's learning and polemics, Śrīvāsa claimed, fed only his pride and vanity. True wisdom, Śrīvāsa stated, consisted in the acquisition of only such knowledge that led to salvation. If he continued in his present course, then Śrīvāsa regretted that Viśvambhara's intellectual exertions would prove abortive. Viśvambhara should study to be pious and to become a devotee of Śrīkṛṣṇa and thus fulfil the earnest desire

of Śrīvāsa and of the Vaiṣṇava community of Navadvīpa.

Viśvambhara replied that he would remain a teacher until such a time as he would meet a good Vaiṣṇava, who would teach him how to worship Kṛṣṇa. Viśvambhara promised that when he did decide to become a Vaiṣṇava devotee, he would do his best to be a sincere one. His reply did not satisfy Śrīvāsa, however.<sup>1</sup>

b) Discussion.

In view of the fact that Vṛndāvana's version for this and the following three episodes is largely uncorroborated by any other biographer, it must be treated with caution. Provided due allowance is made for Vṛndāvana's idiosyncracies, it is possible, however, that valuable information may be gleaned from these accounts.

The first paragraph of Vṛndāvana's version is plausible. Śrīvāsa was a prominent member of the Vaiṣṇava community of Navadvīpa and also a friend of Viśvambhara's father, Jagannāth Misra. As such it is entirely natural that he should take an interest in Viśvambhara's spiritual welfare and try to persuade him to take an active part in the affairs of the Vaiṣṇava community.

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1. C-bhā Ādi, XII, 247-253.



The second paragraph is less reliable, being based upon Vṛndāvana's knowledge of Viśvambhara's future career. It does, however, imply that Viśvambhara's response to Śrīvāsa's efforts to arouse interest in Vaiṣṇavism was cold: he was more interested in pursuing his profession at this stage.

(ii)

### Viśvambhara and Śrīdhara.

#### a) The Evidence.

##### I. Vṛndāvanadaśa's Version.

Śrīdhara was a poor, pious Vaiṣṇava, who had a stall in the market place where he sold the leaves, bark and pith of the plantain tree.

One day Viśvambhara paid Śrīdhara a visit and asked him how it was that he who worshipped Lakṣmī-kānta (The Lover of Lakṣmī, i.e. Viṣṇu) was so poor, being dressed in rags and housed in a delapidated hovel; whilst those who worshipped Caṇḍī and Viṣaharī (Manasā) were rich.

Śrīdhara replied that everyone, rich and poor alike, spent their time like birds, feathering their own little nests and gathering food for themselves and their

dependents. The rich were not happier than the poor: all were, in fact, suffering the fruits of their own acts.

Thus Viśvambhara by his humourous conversation brought out the better and more spiritual side of Śrīdhara's nature. Śrīdhara promised to give Viśvambhara a supply of his wares free of charge each day. Viśvambhara revealed his glory to Śrīdhara intimating that he belonged to the gopī class and was the source of the Ganges. This apparent blasphemy on Viśvambhara's part alarmed Śrīdhara, who had failed to perceive Viśvambhara's godhead.<sup>1</sup>

## II. The Version of the other Biographers

The cordial relations between Viśvambhara and Śrīdhara are attested by the other biographers. Jayānanda<sup>2</sup> relates a miraculous episode in which Viśvambhara reveals to Śrīdhara a place where he may find hidden treasure.

### b) Discussion.

#### I. Vṛndāvanadāsa's Version.

If Vṛndāvana's account of this incident is true, then it is important, for it implies:

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1. C-bhā<sup>XII</sup> Ādi, 7178-213.

2. Jayānanda, p. 23.

1. That Viśvambhara was poor, otherwise why should he want to be supplied with Śrīdhara's wares free of charge? Had Viśvambhara been in a position to pay, he would surely have done so, when Śrīdhara's poverty was so patent.
2. That Viśvambhara was struck by the difference in wealth between the Vaiṣṇavas and the Śaivās. This may have accounted for his reluctance to participate in the affairs of the Vaiṣṇava community. As far as Viśvambhara could see, it would be more profitable to serve the cults of Caṇḍī or Manasā.
3. That Viśvambhara was, as Śrīdhara points out, worldly at this stage in his career.

We are already familiar with Vṛndāvana's belief that Viśvambhara was God incarnate and of his tendency to insinuate this belief into his accounts of incidents in Viśvambhara's life. In view of this, Vṛndāvana's third paragraph may for the most part be disregarded.

## II. The Other Version

This adds nothing worthy of discussion.

(iii)

Viśvambhara and Mukunda Datta.a) The Evidence.Vṛndāvana's Version.

One day Viśvambhara noticed that Mukunda Datta, a learned scholar from Chittagong, moved away at his approach and quickly disappeared in the crowd. Viśvambhara<sup>asked</sup> Govindo, presumably a brother of Mukunda why Mukunda was avoiding him and was told that Mukunda probably had urgent business to attend to. Viśvambhara was dissatisfied with this reply. He pointed out a fundamental difference in the respective attitudes of Mukunda and himself: Mukunda was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, who believed that one's life should be spent in devotion to God; whereas he himself was worldly and he taught the more worldly Arts of Grammar. Viśvambhara suggested that this was a more probable reason for Mukunda's avoiding him.

When there arose an opportunity of questioning Mukunda directly, Viśvambhara asked him, why he was avoiding him and whether he thought that he, Viśvambhara, was // worldly; pointing out that a time would come when Mukunda would not wish to avoid him, for he, Viśvambhara,

would then be a strong supporter of Vaiṣṇavism. Then even the gods themselves would come to his door and Mukunda would follow him like a shadow.<sup>1</sup>

b) Discussion.

The first paragraph implies that Viśvambhara was by this time so strongly worldly, that some members of the Vaiṣṇava community in Navadvīpa, found his company irksome and deliberately avoided him.

The second paragraph follows the familiar pattern of Vṛndāvana's version on these incidents, being a prediction of Viśvambhara's future life, based on Vṛndāvana's knowledge.

(iv)

Viśvambhara and Īśvara Purī.

a) The Evidence.

Vṛndāvana Dāsa's Evidence.

Some time after Viśvambhara had started his career as a teacher in Navadvīpa, Īśvara Purī, a sannyāsī, came on a visit to the district. Īśvara Purī was a disciple

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1. C-bhā Ādi, XI, 37-49.

of Mādhavendra Purī, a pious Vaiṣṇava. Īśvara Purī was given an enthusiastic reception by the Vaiṣṇava community of Navadvīpa.

One day Viśvambhara met Īśvara Purī in the street and greeted him respectfully. Īśvara Purī expressed pleasure in making Viśvambhara's acquaintance, as he had already heard of the young man's scholastic brilliance. Īśvara Purī was so highly impressed with the young man that he wondered whether Viśvambhara did not possess superhuman, possibly even divine qualities.

Īśvara Purī was then invited to dine in Viśvambhara's home. He found the young man most agreeable and thereafter the two met from time to time. Īśvara Purī was at this time engaged on writing a book on the theme of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-līlā. Īśvara Purī asked Viśvambhara to examine the work for grammatical flaws. Viśvambhara expressed reluctance to do so on the grounds that one ought not to criticise the work of a devout bhakta on such a sacred theme, but nevertheless, he was prevailed upon to point out what he considered to be errors in grammatical construction. Īśvara Purī managed to convince him, however, that these were not errors but correct usage.<sup>1</sup>

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1. C-bhāṭī, XI, 85-123.

b) Discussion.

This episode is entirely plausible. If Vṛndāvana's version is true, it demonstrates that Īśvara Purī possessed considerable tact. He did not antagonise Viśvambhara, as Śrīvāsa had done, by attempting to demonstrate the inferiority of scholarship to spiritual life. On the contrary, he flattered Viśvambhara by confining his remarks to Viśvambhara's own interests. His showing of his book on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa theme was probably a ruse to try to awaken Viśvambhara's interest in the theme, rather than the mode of expression. Viśvambhara's reply shows, if anything, how well Īśvara Purī had succeeded in disarming the young man, for Viśvambhara worded his refusal to read the book in such a way that Īśvara Purī could not possibly have been offended. When pressed, Viśvambhara tried to point out errors, but to no avail. Obviously Īśvara Purī had not been in the least concerned about his book's grammar, he merely wished to get Viśvambhara to read it.

General discussion and Conclusion.

The general reliability of Vṛndāvana's evidence on the first three episodes recorded above is attested in each case by his second paragraph. These indicate Vṛndāvana's embarrassment at what he had to record.

As we have seen, Vṛndāvana was convinced that Viśvambhara was God incarnate. Each of these episodes was opposed to his conviction. So he was forced to incorporate these deliberate fabrications in his second paragraphs, predicting Viśvambhara's future behaviour, in order to re-establish his own mental equilibrium.

The picture that emerges from these episodes is this. Viśvambhara was born into a Vaiṣṇava household, but was educated as a scholar. As far as he could see, Vaiṣṇavism had brought his father and his father's friends only poverty. Even the followers of Candī and Manasā were better off financially than the Vaiṣṇavas of Navadvīpa. Life since his father's death had been a hard struggle. He was determined to devote all his energies to earning his daily bread, and was not in the least concerned for his spiritual welfare or eventual salvation.

Friends of his father, such as Śrīvāsa, who had come to Navadvīpa from Sylhet like his father, tried to convince him of the sterility of mere scholarship and to interest him in the affairs of the spirit, but without success. Śrīdhara pointed out to him, that he, Viśvambhara, was too worldly; and that worldliness did not lead to happiness. To spend all one's time feathering



one's nest and gathering food was to behave no better than the birds of the forest; i.e. such behaviour is less than human. But Viśvambhara was unimpressed by such arguments.

Other Vaiṣṇavas, notably those who had come from Chittagong and presumably had either no interest in his family background or no previous acquaintance with his father, found Viśvambhara's attachment to worldly goods irksome and frankly avoided him.

Only Īśvara Purī had the wit to see that to catch a scholar one must behave as a scholar, but their acquaintance in Navadvīpa was too brief to have any lasting influence.

## VIŚVAMBHARA AND THE HUMBLE FOLK OF NAVADVĪPA

### a) The Evidence.

#### Vṛndāvana-dāsa's Version

Viśvambhara used to frequent the houses of weavers, who supplied him with clothes on credit. dairymen used to address him as māmā (maternal uncle) and supply him with dairy produce free of charge. Viśvambhara also took perfume from the house of the perfume-seller, saying if the perfume's fragrance proved durable, he would pay later.

Gardeners, charmed by his air of sanctity, gave him garlands free of charge. Betel dealers gave him betel, arecanut and camphor. And conch sellers gave him their wares freely, saying that they would not object even if he was later unable to pay for them.<sup>1</sup>

### b) Discussion.

This evidence is uncorroborated by any other biographer. Its implications are these:

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1. C-bhāṭī, XII, 108-141.

1. Viśvambhara was poor.
2. The tradesmen addressed him as māmā, 'maternal uncle', which implies a so-called sweet relationship (madhura-samparka) as opposed to a sammāna samparka, 'a relationship of respect'. This form of relationship implies a free, familiar, informal, even at times intimate, relationship, in which a good deal of mutual teasing and banter takes place. The behaviour described above is typical of that type of close relationship; this appears, for example, from Viśvambhara's taking the perfume and promising to pay later, if the fragrance proves durable. This is obviously a joke, implying that future payment is unlikely.
3. Viśvambhara was married, otherwise what need would he have for perfume from the perfume seller?

### VIŚVAMBHARA'S EDUCATION

According to Murāri Gupta Viśvambhara received his primary education from Śrī Viṣṇu Paṇḍit and Sudarśana Paṇḍit. Afterwards Viśvambhara studied under Gaṅgādāsa Paṇḍit, a distinguished Grammarian.<sup>1</sup> Viśvambhara studied the six branches of the Vedas.<sup>2</sup>

According to Kavikarṇapūra, Viśvambhara was educated by the same three teachers.

According to Vṛndāvanadāsa JagannāthaMisra performed the ceremony of Viśvambhara's initiation to study on an auspicious day. Viśvambhara showed his remarkable genius in the art of reading and writing following the instruction of Viśvambhara JagannāthaMisra requested Gaṅgādāsa Paṇḍit to accept the boy as one of his students. Gaṅgādāsa was delighted by Viśvambhara's intelligence and placed him first among the students of the 'Tol'.<sup>3</sup>

From about the age of sixteen Viśvambhara began regularly to debate questions of Logic with older students

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1. Kaṭhā i.9.1-3.

2. Ibid. i.1.3.

3. C-bhā Ādi, VI, VII, VIII.

like Murāri Gupta, Kamalā Kānta and Kṛṣṇānanda. He used to study in solitude at home. By about this time he is said to have written a commentary on a Grammatical text known as Kalapa.<sup>1</sup> Jagannātha Misra was delighted to see this mark of Viśvambhara's intellectual progress.

Viśvambhara was proud of his learning. He used to tease Murāri Gupta by pointing out the latter's poor knowledge of Grammar, and on one occasion challenged him to a debate, in which, however, neither was able to defeat the other. Murāri Gupta was surprised by Viśvambhara's dialectic skill; he wondered how Viśvambhara had managed to acquire such a fantastic command of logic. Once when Viśvambhara touched him, Murāri felt a thrill of ecstasy, and he became desirous of becoming Viśvambhara's pupil.<sup>2</sup>

On another occasion, Viśvambhara defeated Mukunda, a Kṛṣṇa worshipper, by pointing out several rhetorical errors in the extempore Slokas he recited.<sup>3</sup>

On another occasion, Viśvambhara defeated Gadādhara, a student of Nyāya (Logic), in a debate on

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1. C-bhāṭi, VIII, 75-76.

2. Ibid, Ādi, X, 19-35.

3. Ibid, Ādi, XII, 6-19.

'The path of Salvation'.<sup>1</sup>

According to Jayānanda, Viśvambhara studied poetry, drama, law, logic and literature.<sup>2</sup>

Locanadāsa closely follows Murāri Gupta in his account of Viśvambhara's education.

According to Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, Viśvambhara received lessons in grammar from Gaṅgādās Paṇḍit. So remarkable is Viśvambhara's memory alleged to have been that he could memorize a whole text together with its commentaries at a single hearing; and thus he rapidly became expert in the interpretation of texts. While still a novice he defeated several senior students in debate. For further details of his education Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja refers his readers to Vṛndāvanadāsa.<sup>3</sup>

In comparison with the latter account Murāri's description of Viśvambhara's education is very brief. As he was a fellow student of Viśvambhara, we may accept the general authenticity of his account. As, however, he evidently omits many details, it is quite possible that details recorded by others are also authentic.

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1. Ibid, Ādi, XII, 21-27.

2. Jayānanda, p. 18.

3. C-C Ādi, XV, 3-5.

Vṛndāvanadāsa's account of Viśvambhara's education implies that Viśvambhara mastered most branches of Sanskrit scholarship. He attempts to demonstrate Viśvambhara's omniscience due to his being an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. His statement that Murāri Gupta felt a thrill of ecstasy passing through his body whenever, Viśvambhara touched him, is of doubtful authenticity, since Murāri Gupta would certainly have mentioned such an experience. This is obviously an addition by a hagiographer, to which no credit should be given.

That Viśvambhara wrote a commentary on grammar, when still very young, may be true, since all the biographers emphasize Viśvambhara's mastery of grammar. Moreover, he is said to have been welcomed in East Bengal as the author of a grammar. If he did write a grammar, however, we must assume that the work was neither original nor valuable, since no copies of it have survived. If, however, it was a work written by him when he was still a pupil, one would hardly expect it to have survived.

Thus, after his primary education Viśvambhara was admitted at a Sanskrit Tol conducted by a certain Gaṅgādāsa Paṇḍit, a distinguished grammarian. No doubt, Viśvambhara was far above the average intelligence and seems to have relished debates with his fellow students.

On the testimony of Vṛndāvanadāsa we may safely assume that Viśvambhara had a fair knowledge of Logic, Grammar and Rhetoric. To this list may be added Poetry, drama and law on the strength of Jayānanda's testimony, which, is probably based on that of Gadādhara, who had been a close friend of Viśvambhara, and who instructed Jayānanda to compose his 'Caitanya Maṅgala'.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Jayānanda, p. 3.



Chandrasekharendra Saraswati

## Viśvambhara and his Tol.

### a) The Evidence.

#### I. Murāri Gupta's Version.

Viśvambhara used to teach many students. He was a good speaker, who taught his pupils etiquette (laukika-saṅkriyā-vidhi) and poetry.<sup>1</sup>

#### II. Vṛndāvanādāsa's Version.

Viśvambhara's teaching career commenced when he was provided with class-room facilities by a rich brāhmaṇa named Mukunda Saṅjaya.<sup>2</sup>

His school (tol) flourished. His scholastic reputation spread far and wide, and students flocked from all sides to study under him.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike other teachers, he did not seek to maintain an air of gravity and seriousness. He used to criticise other teachers in view of their comparative ignorance. The teachers greatly respected him for his

1. Kaṭhā i.15.1-2 see also Cf. Locanādāsa p. 80.

2. C-bhāṭi, X, 38.

3. Ibid., Adi, XII, 276-278.

profound scholarship. His students held him in great reverence.<sup>1</sup>

### III. The Evidence of the other Biographers.

The version of the other biographers <sup>like</sup> Kavi-karṇapūra, Jayānanda, Locana, and Kṛṣṇadāsa is meagre and adds nothing to the above.

#### b) Discussion.

The scant information about Viśvambhara's teaching career recorded by most of the biographers indicates their lack of interest in this aspect of his life. Vṛndāvana alone is at pains to record as full a picture as possible of this period in Viśvambhara's life. The picture he paints of a gay, humourous young teacher is plausible in view of his extreme youth, when he commenced his career. Had his career continued, he may well have acquired the grave, ponderous manner that was expected of him by some older members of his profession. Vṛndāvana's reference to thousands of students is obviously exaggerated, if his references to Viśvambhara's poverty elsewhere are to be believed. No doubt Viśvambhara

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1. Ibid, Ādi, XII, 99-100, ~~Adi~~, Ādi, XI, 5. Ādi, XIII, 14, Ādi, X, 42-45, Ādi, XI, 5.

enjoyed moderate success as a teacher. He obviously had an engaging personality.

### General Discussion on the Chronology of this Period.

Before embarking upon a discussion of the visit to Gayā, that was to change the whole course of Viśvambhara's life completely, it is necessary to clarify the chronology of his life as a householder and teacher.

Murāri Gupta states that Viśvambhara married Lakṣmī Devī, whilst still studying grammar under Gaṅgādāsa Paṇḍit.<sup>1</sup> Now Vṛndāvanadāsa tells us that Viśvambhara was still studying grammar under Gaṅgādāsa at the age of 16.<sup>2</sup> We presume that Viśvambhara first married, therefore, at about the age of 16 or 17 at the latest.

We assume that his teaching career must have commenced soon after his marriage, at about the age of 17 or 18.

Some time after his marriage, possibly before or after the commencement of his school (tol), he spent a few months in East Bengal teaching.

According to Kavikarnapūra. Viśvambhara returned

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1. Kaṇḍāi.9.11.

2. C-bhāṭi, X, 14.

to Navadvīpa from Gayā after the end of Pauṣa<sup>1</sup> whereupon Viśvambhara continued to teach for another four months,<sup>2</sup> but he had to give up his career as a teacher due to his devotional ecstasies. Afterwards he spent eight months<sup>3</sup> in practicing Saṅkīrtana. Vṛndāvanadāsa<sup>4</sup> and following him Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja<sup>5</sup> agree with this description of Kavikarṇapūra stating that Viśvambhara displayed his devotional ecstasies for a year in Navadvīpa following his return from Gayā. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja writes that Viśvambhara turned into a Sannyāsī at the age of 24.

Thus Viśvambhara's teaching career probably comprises the period from the age of 17/18 to 24, i.e. during six or seven years.

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1. Mahākāvya, IV. 76.

2. Ibid., 5. 24.

3. Ibid., 5. 125.

4. C-bhāMadhya, II, 346.

5. C-C, Ādi, XVII, 30.

## CHAPTER V

### VIŚVAMBHARA'S VISIT TO GAYĀ.

a) The evidence.

I. Murāri Gupta's Testimony.

When Viśvambhara set out for Gayā to perform the Śrāddha of his father, he was in good spirits and his behaviour was perfectly normal. He talked cheerfully with his companions and enjoyed watching the deer sporting in the fields. On reaching the River Carandhāyaka, he took a bath and then climbed Mount Mandāra to visit a temple. Then he contracted fever. Prescribing for himself 'the water touched by the foot of a brahmin' as the best medicine, he drank some and recovered. Resuming his journey, he crossed a river at Rājgir and worshipped<sup>P</sup> at Brahmākunḍa. It was at Brahmākunḍa that he met Īśvara Puṁ. The sight of this great sage filled Viśvambhara's heart with joy and Viśvambhara asked him how he was to find salvation and the feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This gratified Īśvara Puṁ and he initiated him with a ten-syllable mantra. Viśvambhara was deeply moved and extolled Īśvara Puṁ, saying that he, Īśvara Puṁ, had bestowed a rare boon upon him. After presenting Pinda to his father in the

temple, Viśvambhara saw the foot-print of Viṣṇu. The sight of the foot-print filled him with pleasure, but Viśvambhara began to wonder why it did not fill him with intense joy. Then suddenly tears began to roll down his cheeks; his pores perspired; his chest grew wet with tears; and his mind lost consciousness of his surroundings. He left Gayā, bound for Madhuṣana (Mathurā), determined to settle there, but a celestial voice ordered him to return to Navadvīpa for a while, adding that afterwards he could go to Madhuṣana or wherever he pleased, for he was Parameśvara, the Supreme Being. Accordingly Viśvambhara returned to Navadvīpa.<sup>1</sup>

## II. Kavikarṇapūra's Testimony.

Viśvambhara set out for Gayā to perform his father's Śrāddha. He was accompanied by his uncle, Ācāryya Ratna (the husband of his maternal aunt) and some others, who are not named. He talked with them happily on the way.

On reaching the Bhāgīrathī, he selected a beautiful spot near a lake to spend the night, and then went to bathe in the lake before settling down for the

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1. Kaṇḍā.i.15.6-19, i.16.1-11.

night. The following morning they resumed their journey and reaching the River Cīra Viśvambhara bathed there and offered oblations to his ancestors and the gods. He caught fever but did not allow it to disturb his daily routine. He cured it by drinking 'water touched by the foot of a Brāhmaṇa'. He then went to ~~Rajgir~~ <sup>Rajgir</sup> and Brahma-saravara; and performed the obsequial rites of his father with the help of Priests. He was happy when entering Gayā and it was there that he met Īśvara Puṇḍ. His encounter with Īśvara Puṇḍ was much the same as Murāri Gupta described it, except that Viśvambhara was initiated not with a ten-syllable mantra, but with the Gopīnātha-ballabha mantra. Viśvambhara then visited the Phalgu River, Pretśīla, Dakṣiṇa-Mānasa-Saravara, Uttara-Mānasa-Saravara, and Gayā-Śīra. He also saw the lotus feet of Gadādhara (Viṣṇu). The remainder of Kaṭikarnapūra's testimony accords with that of Murāri Gupta.

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III. Vṛndāvanadāsa's Testimony.

Realising that his time for self-revelation was at hand, Viśvambhara set out for Gayā with his numerous disciples to perform the Śrāddha. During the journey he beguiled <sup>like</sup> time with happy discourse. After a few days he reached Mount Mandāra and climbed it to

see the image of Madhusūdana in a temple there. Then he fell ill, and, in order to demonstrate the power of Brāhmaṇas, he drank water touched by the foot of a Brāhmaṇa and was instantly cured. He then went to the Pūnpun River, bathed in it, and made oblations to his father. On reaching Gayā, he saluted it; went to the Brahmākūṇḍa and bathed in it; and then went to Cakraverā to see the foot-print of Viṣṇu. The foot-print was surrounded by Brāhmaṇas who sang its praises. Viśvambhara was overwhelmed with a feeling of intense devotion: tears welled up in his eyes and rolled down his cheeks; and perspiration exuded from his pores. The brahmins gazed upon him with wonder. As luck would have it, Īśvara-Purī was passing by at the time.

Viśvambhara saluted him with complete sincerity. Delighted Īśvara Purī embraced him and both were bathed in tears. Viśvambhara told him that the moment he, Viśvambhara had set eyes on Īśvara Purī, his visit to Gayā had borne fruit. He added that the offering of Piṇḍa at tirtha-sthāna might have the power to save the departed, but it could save only those for whom it was specifically intended: the seeing of Īśvara Purī by Viśvambhara alone, however, would free all the bonds of ~~kropas~~ of his ancestors instantly, for Īśvara Purī was above all the



tīrthas; he was the prime source of blessings. Viśvambhara went on to say that he had surrendered at the feet of Īśvara Purī and to request that he, Īśvara Purī, deliver him from earthly life by offering him the nectar-juice of Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Īśvara Purī replied that judging by Viśvambhara's scholarship and nobility of character, he was evidently born under divine influence. He added that the sight of Viśvambhara was as spiritually efficacious as that of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He went on to say that he had had a dream about Viśvambhara the previous night. This had now come true, for Viśvambhara now stood before him in person. Viśvambhara had occupied his thoughts ever since their meeting in Navadvīpa.

Viśvambhara asked and was granted Īśvara Purī's permission to perform the Srāddha. He performed this ceremony on the banks of the Phalga River with a cake of sand. He pleased the Brāhmaṇas by giving them sacerdotal fees and conversing with them happily. He then visited Dakṣiṇa-Mānasa-Sarāvara, and Rāma-Gayā (where in his incarnation as Rāma he had performed the obsequial rites of his father and performed a further Srāddha for his father. He then visited Yudhiṣṭhira-Gayā, Uttara-Mānasa, Bhīma-Gayā, Śiva-Gayā, Brahmā-Gayā and Soḍaśa-Gayā. He afterwards bathed in the Brahmākūṇḍa, and performed

yet another Śrāddha at Gayā<sup>sīra</sup>; and worshipped the foot-print of Viṣṇu with flowers and sandal paste. He then returned to his quarters to prepare his meal. Īśvara Purī turned up, reciting the names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, so Viśvambhara gave him the food he had prepared and then cooked for himself.

He then visited Kumārahaṭṭa (the modern Hāli Sahara), birth-place of Īśvara Purī. He saluted the place reverently because of its association with his spiritual guru, wept profusely, and then placed some of the local soil in his bag, declaring it to be his very life, his all, his soul, for it originated from the birth-place of Īśvara Purī.

One day at Viśvambhara's own request, Īśvara Purī initiated him with a ten-syllable mantra. When muttering this mantra, Viśvambhara began to weep, crying that Kṛṣṇa was his life, his beloved, and asking where his beloved had gone, after stealing his heart and <sup>and</sup> abandoning him. He rolled on the ground, weeping and coated in dust. His disciples tried to console him, but Viśvambhara asked them to go to Nayadvīpa to tell his wife and mother that he could be a householder no more. He wanted to go to Mathurā to find his beloved Kṛṣṇa.

One night he set out for Mathurā without informing his disciples, but on the way he heard a celestial voice, which told him not to go to Mathurā right now, but to return to Navadvīpa. He, Viśvambhara, was Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha (Viṣṇu), the voice said, and the purpose of his present incarnation was to propagate Kṛṣṇa-Prema throughout the world. Prompted by this celestial voice, Viśvambhara put off his journey to Mathurā and left Gayā with his disciples for Navadvīpa.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. Jayānanda's Testimony.

Jayānanda's testimony differs from that of the three biographers so far considered on the following points:

1. Viśvambhara's visit to Gayā took place before his marriage to Lakṣmī Devī, almost immediately after his father's death.
2. He was accompanied by Haridāsa Thākura, Paṇḍit Gadādhara, Goṇinātha, Murāri, Mukunda, Bakreśvara, Jagadānanda, Govindā, and Ācārya Ratna.
3. Viśvambhara met Īśvara Purī and Mādhavendra Purī at Rājgir; and was initiated there by Īśvara Purī with

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1. C-bhāṭi, XVII, 9-139.

the Gopāla mantra.

4. An old woman was cured of fever by drinking 'water touched by the foot of Viśvambhara'.

5. He was dissuaded from going to Mathurā by his weeping companions, not by a celestial voice.

6. He restored to life Tilottamā, who had been turned to stone by the curse of Nārada.<sup>1</sup>

#### V. Locanadāsa's Testimony.

Locana's testimony is generally in accord with that of Murāri Gupta. He differs on the following points:

1. He was initiated with the Gopīnātha-mahāmantra by Īśvara Purī.

2. This initiation gave rise to his Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-bhāva.

3. He began to proclaim that he was the Supreme Being.<sup>2</sup>

#### VI. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's Testimony.

Kṛṣṇadāsa's account is brief. Viśvambhara went to Gayā to offer Piṇḍa; he met Īśvara Purī in

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1. Jayānanda, pp. 32-35.

2. Locanadāsa, pp. 80-83.

Gayā and was initiated by him. Thereupon he exhibited his divine love.<sup>1</sup>

b) Discussion

I. Murāri Gupta's Testimony.

The sequence of events given by Murāri is:

1. Viśvambhara sets out for Gayā to perform his father's Śrāddha as a normal man in a festive mood, who comments eagerly upon each small change of scene.

2. He climbs Mount Mandāra to visit a temple.

3. He contracts fever and then a dramatic change of mood ensues: he cures himself not with medicine like a normal man, but with water touched by the foot of a Brāhmaṇa.

4. He crosses a river at Rājgir and bathes in the Brahmakuṇḍa. It is here that he meets Īśvara Purī, whom he immediately asks how he is to find salvation at the feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Īśvara Purī initiates him with a ten-syllable mantra there and then. Viśvambhara is deeply moved but exhibits no signs of his later religious fervour: weeping, trembling, rolling on the ground and unconsciousness of his surroundings.

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1. C-C Ādi, XVII, 6.

5. After performing his father's Śrāddha, he goes to see the famous foot-print [the Viṣṇu Pāda Temple] of Viṣṇu. The foot-print fills him with pleasure, but he is initially disappointed as he had anticipated a far greater emotional response. Then suddenly it comes. He weeps and perspires, and loses consciousness of his surroundings. The intensity of his experience is such that its effects are permanent: from that moment his life as a householder has virtually ended, his one desire is to find Kṛṣṇa and dwell permanently in his presence. He sets out for Mathurā, but is urged to return to Navadvīpa by a prompting from deep inside his subconsciousness (the 'celestial voice'). In compliance with this inner guidance he momentarily abandons his quest for Kṛṣṇa and returns to Navadvīpa.

## II. Kavikarnapūra's Version.

Kavikarnapūra's testimony largely corroborates that of Murāri, but there are three minor differences:

1. He performs his father's Śrāddha before, not after, his meeting with Īśvara Purī.

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1. For the sites visited by pilgrims to Gayā see: L.P. Vidyārthi, The Sacred Complex in Hindu Gayā, 1961.

2. Īśvara Purī initiates him, not with a ten-syllable mantra, but with Gopīnātha-vallabha-mantra.

3. He visits far more shrines and sacred spots such as the Phalgu River, the Pretśilā, the Dakṣiṇa and Uttara-~~mānasa~~-~~saravara~~ and the Gayā-~~śira~~.

Viśvambhara may well have performed numerous Śrāddhas in and around Gayā, so the first difference is of no importance.

The difference in the Mantra would suggest the comparative unimportance of the initiation ceremony. If the ceremony was the deciding factor in Viśvambhara's transformation from a householder into a religious mystic, then surely people would have remembered what particular Mantra it was.

The list of sacred spots is probably authentic. Since Viśvambhara was in Gayā, he would presumably visit the same sites as other pilgrims.

### III. Vṛndāvanadāsa's Testimony.

Vṛndāvanadāsa introduces several changes into the sequence of events recorded by Murāri Gupta.

1. Viśvambhara set out for Gayā to perform his father's Śrāddha only when he realised that his time for self-revelation was at hand.

1. He drank the water touched by the foot of a brahmin not so much to cure his fever as to demonstrate the power of Brāhmaṇas.

3. He met Īśvara Purī, not before his mystic experience at the sight of the foot-print of Viṣṇu, but immediately afterwards.

4. He eulogised Īśvara Purī and was greatly blessed in return.

5. He asked for Īśvara Purī's permission to perform the Śrāddha and was granted it. And performed the ceremony with sand, instead of a piṇḍa of rice, 3. Baṣṭana.

6. He was not initiated, before his mystic experience at Viṣṇupāda, but some days later.

7. He visited Kumārahaṭṭa, the birth place of Īśvara Purī, and regarded its very earth as possessing great sanctity, because of its association with Īśvara Purī.

8. It was the reciting of the Sacred Mantra given to him by Īśvara Purī that induced a second mystic experience, and prompted Viśvambhara to set out for Mathurā.

9. A celestial voice informed him of the purpose of his present incarnation: to propagate Kṛṣṇa-Prema.

10. He had come to Gayā, not via Rājgir, but via



Punpun.

We may begin with the least important of these innovations. Vṛndāvana states that Viśvambhara went to Gayā, via Punpun, rather than via Rājgir, in contradiction to all the other biographers. He was probably prompted to do so, because the route via Punpun is the most common pilgrims' route to Gayā from Navadvīpa. Thus item 10 is disposed of.

Items 1 and 2 are interdependent. Vṛndāvana was convinced of Viśvambhara's godhead and gives constant references to it. Item 1 is merely further proof, if such is needed, of this conviction of Vṛndāvana. If it has any importance here, it is as an indication of Vṛndāvana's realisation that the turning point in Viśvambhara's life was his visit to Gayā. Since Viśvambhara was God incarnate, naturally all his acts have a moral value. This explains and disposes of item 2.

Item 9 is only an expression of Vṛndāvana's opinion. It probably reflects contemporary ideas, and is therefore important to that extent.

The remaining items, namely 3 to 8, all have one feature in common: Īśvara Purī. It is our opinion that Vṛndāvanadāsa deliberately remoulded the order of the events in Gayā, in order to glorify Īśvara Purī,

because of his central importance to this particular sect of Vaiṣṇavism.

Murāri Gupta stated that Viśvambhara had a powerful mystic experience by the foot-print of Viṣṇu and immediately thereafter set out for Mathurā. Thus, if Vṛndāvana were to succeed in his attempt to glorify Īśvara Purī, he had somehow to insert convincing references to the influence of Īśvara Purī on Viśvambhara between the mystic experience by the foot-print and his departure for Mathurā. Unless there were two distinct mystic experiences, Vṛndāvana's task was impossible. Hence he created two mystic experiences. The first occurred, as Murāri had recorded, by the Viṣṇupāda, the second, again in agreement with Murāri, immediately before his leaving Mathurā. Thus Vṛndāvana was to some extent able to preserve Murāri's course of events, whilst significantly altering the role of Īśvara Purī.

Vṛndāvana makes the meeting of Īśvara Purī and Viśvambhara almost coincide with the first mystic experience, thus channelling our interest away from the foot-print on to Īśvara Purī. Our interest remains with Īśvara Purī, while Viśvambhara is made to seek his permission to perform the Srāddha; to visit his birth-place, Kūmārahaṭṭa, and treat its soil with great

veneration; to ask for initiation at Īśvara Purī's hands; and finally to go through a second mystic experience as a result of reciting the mystic formula (mantra) supplied by Īśvara Purī. We suggest that all these events were conditioned to suit Vṛndāvana's personal belief.

Vṛndāvanadāsa is the only biographer to record that Viśvambhara had previously met Īśvara Purī in Navadvīpa. If the influence of Īśvara Purī had been as great as Vṛndāvana claims, why then had Viśvambhara been unimpressed in Navadvīpa? Why had he not sought initiation there and saved himself a long journey? Surely the answer is that it was not the person, but the place that influenced Viśvambhara. Viśvambhara would later almost faint at the mere mention of Gayā, as Vṛndāvana himself points out elsewhere. Was he ever known to faint at the mention of Īśvara Purī? NO. Vṛndāvanadāsa overstates his case and thereby defeats his own object. Viśvambhara seeks Īśvara Purī's permission for a trivial event like performing a Śrāddha. When an event of real moment hangs in the balance, it is the promptings of a 'celestial voice' from the deep recesses of his subconscious mind that determines his course of actions not his so-called guru.

The use of sand instead of rice in the per-

formance of the Śrāddha has no great importance. It is unattested by other biographers and is therefore probably fabricated as a kind of parable indicating that the letter of ritual law is unimportant, provided its spirit is observed. This item is of the same kind as item 1 and 2 above.

#### IV. Jayānanda's Version.

The changes in the scheme of events introduced by Jayānanda are set out on pps. ~~119~~ and ~~120~~.

Item 1 contradicts the testimony of most other biographers and is probably intended to illustrate Viśvambhara's orthodoxy. As far as we can judge, Viśvambhara was never particularly orthodox, (at least, as far as the letter of the doctrine is concerned) so we reject this item of Jayānanda's testimony.

Item 2 is unlikely. When Viśvambhara set out for Gayā, he was apparently a common householder, who had been unsuccessfully wooed by the Vaiṣṇava community of Navadvīpa. This item would imply that Viśvambhara was already a prominent figure in that community. We therefore reject this list of companions with the exception of Ācārya Ratna, who was a relative. As a relative it would be perfectly fitting that Ācārya Ratna should

have participated in what had originally been merely a family ceremony: the performance of the śrāddha of Jagannātha Misra.

Item 3 may be true. It differs only slightly from Murāri's testimony.

Item 4 is unlikely. It is the kind of event that may have happened later but not on the way to Gayā.

Item 5. This celestial voice evidently represents a personal hallucination or flash of inspiration, and <sup>it</sup> is quite feasible that this was the decisive factor in the change of his plans. Though the earlier biographers make no mention of it, it is intrinsically probable, that his companions, more worldly than he, would try to persuade him to return to his wife and mother, and we may suggest that though Jayānanda may have imagined this incident, it may yet be true.

Item 6 is another of Jayānanda's literary embellishments. It is probably based on the story of Ahalyā in the Rāmāyaṇa. It bears witness to Jayānanda's conception of divine behaviour, and also to his wide reading, but has no relevance to the life of this historical figure, Viśvambhara.

## V. Locanadāsa's Testimony.

The three main additional details given by Locanadāsa have been mentioned on page. **120.**

Item 1 increases the uncertainty regarding the name of the actual mantra and so suggests its unimportance.

Item 2 suggests that Locanadāsa was influenced by Vṛndāvanadāsa.

Item 3 is certainly untrue as there is not the slightest other evidence that Viśvambhara ever proclaimed, while conscious, that he was the Supreme Being.

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## VI. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja.

Kṛṣṇadāsa's testimony betrays how successful Vṛndāvana's propaganda on behalf of Īśvara Purī's reputation was.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.

After a careful consideration of the available evidence, our conclusion about what actually happened accords substantially with the outline presented by Murāri Gupta.

It was probably almost ten years after the

death of his father that Viśvambhara could afford to go to Gayā to perform his father's Śrāddha. He set off with a light heart like a man suddenly released from the burden of household responsibilities. He chatted gaily with his companions and greatly enjoyed the occasional diversions by the wayside, such as the grazing deer; and he also enjoyed camping in the open air in scenes of great natural beauty.

Naturally, since his purpose was to perform his father's Śrāddha, his thoughts turned to his father and his father's faith, Vaiṣṇavism. He visited Vaiṣṇava shrines, such as that on Mount Mandāra. It is doubtful whether he had ever seen such impressive Vaiṣṇavite shrines before.

Then he contracted fever. It is our belief that this was a real turning point in his life. If it was, it would not be the first time that a religious conversion of great moment followed an illness. Another well-known example is the conversion of Saul. That Viśvambhara was, in fact, converted from this moment is indicated by two facts: first drinking water touched by the feet of a Brāhmaṇa to cure his fever was surely the act of a convert, not of an ordinary householder; and second, his asking for the path towards salvation

at the moment when he saw Īśvara Purī without first being persuaded to do so by Īśvara Purī, shows that he was already converted. Thus, in our view the role of Īśvara Purī is of comparatively minor importance. He just happened to be the first distinguished Vaiṣṇava he met after his fever.

Our conviction that the general lines of our interpretation are correct is strengthened by Viśvambhara's initial disappointment with Viṣṇu's foot-print. He expected to be deeply moved, as he had now accepted his father's faith and would participate in the activities of the Vaiṣṇava community after his return to Navadvīpa. But the intensity of his eventual experience <sup>of</sup> by the foot-print was probably greater than he had ever expected. Up to that moment he had still been a householder as his father had been. But the intensity of this experience carried him far beyond what he had anticipated: it transformed him in one moment from a householder into a religious mystic, who led a complete transformation of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal.



## CHAPTER VI

### VIŚVAMBHARA'S SPIRITUAL PHASE

#### FIRST PERIOD

(i)

Murāri Gupta writes that Viśvambhara returned to Navadvīpa at the behest of a celestial voice!<sup>1</sup> The change in him was evident right from the moment when his mother Śacī Devī came to welcome him. She was weeping with joy to see him safely home again. Viśvambhara wept too and cried in a voice tremulous with emotion: 'Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa'.<sup>2</sup> He remained in the same state of emotional excitation when he went to teach his students.<sup>3</sup> He was, as it were, in a permanent state of enchantment due to his love for Hari and at times tears streamed ceaselessly from his eyes. On one occasion his emotion became so intense that he fell to the ground in the home of Sūklāmbhara Brahmācārī, a

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1. See above p. 114.

2. Kaṇḍa; ii.1.8.

3. Ibid.; ii.1.8.

benefactor of his, and began to roll about (uncontrollably)<sup>1</sup> without having control of his movements. Sometimes he wept so much that he lost all sense of time. He would wake up during the day and ask how long it would be till dawn. And sometimes he would swoon at the sound of Harināma and at others he would tremble like a daṇḍa (bamboo staff) on hearing it.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of his love for God and his frequent ecstasies, he still had to earn a living, so he could not yet be totally indifferent to the affairs of the world. Thus he continued to teach his students.<sup>3</sup>

Once, when walking in the street with Śrī Nāsa and the latter's brothers, he heard the sound of Hari's flute which overwhelmed him and brought upon him a transitory swoon.<sup>4</sup>

Viśvambhara greatly enjoyed going to the home of Śrī Nāsa, where he, Śrī Nāsa, Śrī Rāma, and Mukunda Datta, used to dance and sing Irṣṇa songs almost every

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1. Kaṇḍa.ii.1.20-21.

2. Ibid; ii.1.24-25.

3. Ibid; ii.2.3-4.

4. Ibid; ii.2.1-2.

day and night.<sup>1</sup>

Once when Viśvambhara was brooding on how he might best approach his Lord, Hari, Devī (his wife) came and said to him: 'Surely you must have realised by now that you were born by the volition of Hari, so that your life might form a model of perfect Bhakti for all men to witness. Do not sit and brood. Kīrtana (songs of praise) is the means of worship (Yajña) in this wretched age (Kali Yuga). This Yajña requires the grace of Hari for its performance'.<sup>2</sup> The words of Devī greatly cheered Viśvambhara. Murāri Gupta's account of Viśvambhara's gradual spiritual awakening is important. The transformation in Viśvambhara's personality is clearly brought out. One observes how Viśvambhara's Rādhā-Bhāva, which was first manifested in Gayā, gradually intensified after his return.

And, as is evident from his account, Viśvambhara's heightened emotional sensibility made a profound impression on Murāri Gupta, who witnessed Viśvambhara's return to Navadvīpa and many of the ecstatic trances that Viśvambhara

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1. Kaṭaka ii.2.5-6.

2. Ibid; ii.2.7-10.

experienced there.

Murāri's account is, on the whole, factual. There are but two references to supernatural events: first, the celestial voice, and second, the hearing of Hari's flute. Both may be subjectively true, in that Viśvambhara genuinely believed that he heard them. Murāri was therefore right in recording them. Thus there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of Murāri's account of this phase of Viśvambhara's life, when he stands, as it were, poised on the threshold between his old life as a house-holder and teacher and his new life as a religious evangelist. In Murāri's account we see the beginning of Viśvambhara's involvement with the Vaiṣṇava community of Navadvīpa. He is welcomed into the home of Śrī Nāsa, a prominent Vaiṣṇava, where in the singing of Kīrtana Viśvambhara finds a happy release for his extreme emotionalism.

We cannot close our discussion of Murāri's account without considering the identity of Devī. Devī originally means 'goddess' or 'queen', but it is unlikely that it is used in this sense here. In modern Bengali the word Devī is prefixed to the names of married women

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and is thus roughly equivalent to the English Mrs. Taken in this sense, Devī could refer either to Sacī Devī, Viśvambhara's mother, or to Viṣṇupriyā Devī, his wife. Since the mother<sup>1</sup> is generally mentioned by name, Devī most probably refers to Viṣṇupriyā. The only alternative explanation is that Murāri intended to imply that the speaker was a goddess. This interpretation is most unlikely since he nowhere else refers to the Mother Goddess, and when a celestial voice<sup>1</sup> is heard by Viśvambhara Murāri elsewhere states this quite explicitly.

The biographers hardly ever mention Viṣṇupriyā, so that we know little about her. The biographers are inclined to emphasize the spiritual side of Viśvambhara's life and to neglect its more common-place aspects. There is reason to believe that Viṣṇupriyā played an important part in the spiritual development of Viśvambhara. We are told that when Viśvambhara began to frequent almost every night Śrī~~V~~māsa's house to sing the glory of Kṛṣṇa, he could not devote himself fully to the pursuit of Kṛṣṇa as he had also obligations towards his wife. It seems as though Viṣṇupriyā noticed the great change which

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1. See above p. 114

had taken place in him, and she reassured and encouraged him by declaring that he was under Kṛṣṇa's influence and should practise Kīrtana for the fulfilment of bhakti. This passage, though perhaps not representing the exact words of Viśvambhara's wife, at least indicates that she appreciated and respected his spiritual power and gave him encouragement in the pursuit of his spiritual ideals. The account may be based on something told to Murāri Gupta by Viśvambhara himself.

(ii)

According to Vṛndāvanadāsa the people of Navadvīpa were happy to receive Viśvambhara when he returned from Gayā.<sup>1</sup> Viśvambhara told his relatives and neighbours about his visit. He said that he owed his visit to Gayā to the blessing of his kinsmen.<sup>2</sup> All the Vaiṣṇavas were also happy to know of his arrival and went to see him.<sup>3</sup> He described the Gayā mystery to some sincere Vaiṣṇavas but wept incessantly at the

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1. C-bhā Madhya, I, 10-13.

2. Ibid., Madhya, I, 14.

3. Ibid., Madhya, I, 20.

utterance of Pādapaḍma-tīrtha, referring to Kṛṣṇa's name.<sup>1</sup> The garden is said to have been flooded with his tears; he began to tremble and perspire.<sup>2</sup> The Vaiṣṇavas such as Śrīmāna Paṇḍit realized that a change had taken place, for they had never seen Viśvambhara in a state like this before and thought that Kṛṣṇa must have favoured him.<sup>3</sup> The explicit reference to Śrīmāna Paṇḍit suggests that he was the source of Vṛndāvanadāsa's information.

When Viśvambhara regained consciousness he asked two of the Vaiṣṇavas to go to the house of Sukāmbhara Brahmācārī where he could describe his sorrowful experience.<sup>4</sup>

From that time onwards he was under the influence of Kṛṣṇa; he was indifferent to the affairs of the world. Sacī could not understand Viśvambhara's changed nature. In her perplexity she prayed to Kṛṣṇa to guide her in her conduct towards her son.<sup>5</sup>

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1. C-bhā, Madhya, I, 23-25, 29.

2. Ibid., Madhya, I, 31-32.

3. Ibid., Madhya, I, 33-36.

4. Ibid., Madhya, I, 37-40.

5. C-bhā Madhya, I, 42-46.

The Vaiṣṇavas used to go to Śrīmāsa's garden to gather flowers. Śrīmāna Paṇḍit informed them of the remarkable change that had taken place in Viśvambhara. He reported Viśvambhara's request that some of the Vaiṣṇavas should assemble at Suklāmbhara Brahmācārī's house on the following day. Śrīmāna's report delighted the Vaiṣṇavas. Śrīmāsa prayed that Kṛṣṇa might increase the number of their members.<sup>1</sup>

When Gadādhara learnt of the change in Viśvambhara he went and hid himself in Suklāmbhara's house in order to hear what Viśvambhara had to say on the subject of Kṛṣṇa.<sup>2</sup> The reason for his concealment was twofold: first, he had not been explicitly invited to the meeting; second, he had previously quarrelled with Viśvambhara.

Sadāśiva, Murāri Gupta, Śrīmāna and Suklāmbhara assembled at the meeting-place and in due course were joined by Viśvambhara, who revealed to them that he had once found Kṛṣṇa, but was not sure of how he might find Him again. After these words he collapsed on the floor bringing down with him one of the house-pillars, which he had embraced in his intense emotion.

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1. C-bhāMadhya, I, 51-73.

2. Ibid, Madhya, I, 79-80.



His collapse greatly affected the Vaiṣṇavas. Gadādhara fainted and the others wept. Gradually Viśvambhara recovered and asked the name of the man who had been in hiding and was informed that it was his intimate friend Gadādhara. Viśvambhara was pleased to see Gadādhara so moved and remarked that Gadādhara had been a devotee of Kṛṣṇa since his childhood. Gadādhara was extremely fortunate in this; he said, since it had endowed him with intense bhakti towards Kṛṣṇa. Viśvambhara expressed regret at having so far spent his own life in the pursuit of worldly ends, instead of in the pursuit of Kṛṣṇa as Gadādhara had done. Viśvambhara now felt that he had lost Kṛṣṇa.<sup>1</sup>

After Viśvambhara had left, the Vaiṣṇavas expressed surprise at his trances; and related them joyfully to the rest of the Vaiṣṇava community of Navadvīpa.<sup>2</sup>

The Vaiṣṇavas held diverse opinions about Viśvambhara. Some said that God Himself had come to them; some said that through Him they could take revenge against the Pāṣaṇḍīs; a few said that the mysteries of Kṛṣṇa-līlā would be revealed through Viśvambhara.<sup>3</sup>

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1. C-bhāMadhya, I, 81-106.

2. Ibid., Madhya, I, 108-110.

3. C-bhāMadhya, I, 112-114.

Others said that under the influence of Īśvarapurī in Gayā, Viśvambhara may have witnessed a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa.<sup>1</sup>

Viśvambhara visited his tutor Gaṅgādāsa Paṇḍit. They discoursed happily. Gaṅgādāsa asked him to resume his teaching from the following day.<sup>2</sup>

Viśvambhara did so. But his discourses were restricted to one topic only: Kṛṣṇa. He told his pupils of a dark boy playing on the flute who accompanied him everywhere, for to Viśvambhara all places were the abode of Kṛṣṇa; and his ears would admit nothing but the sound of Kṛṣṇa's name. Finally he told them that he could no longer teach them, and advised them to study under different tutors according to their temperament. Thus he disclosed the secrets of his heart to them and in tears tied up his books for the last time.

The students said that no books could compare with the lessons they had learnt from him, and these they would remember for the rest of their lives. So saying, they bound up their books and began to recite Hari's name. Bathed in tears, Viśvambhara embraced them.

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1. C-bhā Madhya, I, 115.

2. Ibid, Madhya, I, 120-124.

They too wept disconsolately. Viśvambhara blessed them and advised them to devote their lives to the service of Kṛṣṇa, for in his view intellectual effort was vain, since it was untouched by Kṛṣṇa. True wisdom consisted in the performance of Kṛṣṇa-Kīrtana. "What's Kīrtana?" they asked, and Viśvambhara demonstrated it to them. He clapped his hands and shouted, saying that they should bow down to Hari, to Kṛṣṇa, Yādava, Gopāla, Govinda, Rāma and Madhusūdana.<sup>1</sup> He started to sing Kīrtana and standing round him his students sang in chorus. Viśvambhara rolled on the ground in ecstasy and asked them to repeat the nāma.<sup>1</sup>

The sound of Saṁkīrtana attracted the people of Navadvīpa and they came to Viśvambhara's house. The Vaiṣnavas of the neighbourhood came running to witness it. They ~~and said~~ "Kīrtana had come to 'Nadiā-Nagara!', and ~~that~~ such devotion was rare in this world!"<sup>2</sup>

Viśvambhara used to say that his devotion for Kṛṣṇa would grow in him through the service of others. Thus he would wring out the garments of those who were washing, carry people's baskets to their homes for them,

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1. C-bhāMadhya, I, 142-174, 250-411.

2. Ibid., Madhya, I, 412-416.

collect Kuṣa (sacrificial grass) for others, and dig holy soil from the bed of the Ganges for devotees. He declared that these services clarified his vision of Kṛṣṇa.<sup>1</sup>

He is said to have pacified the Vaiṣṇavas by saying that he would do his best to check the opposition of the Pāṣaṇḍīs.<sup>2</sup>

In ecstasy he said that he would destroy the Pāṣaṇḍīs, and repeatedly said, "I am He".<sup>3</sup>

The ignorant could not understand Viśvambhara's devotional ecstasies. They thought that he was suffering from a mysterious malady (epilepsy?), and asked Śacī Devī to have him treated medically.<sup>4</sup> Informed of this mysterious malady in Viśvambhara, Śrīnāsa came to see him and after examining him declared that the symptoms were not of epilepsy (Vāyu Vyādhī)<sup>5</sup> as alleged by the

1. C-bhāMadhya, II, 43-45.

2. Ibid., Madhya, II, 75-78.

3. Ibid., Madhya, II, 85-86.

4. Ibid., Madhya, II, 96-102.

5. Ibid., Madhya, II, 95. Cf. also C-C Madhya, XVIII, 174.

ignorant but of Prema-lakṣaṇam in an extreme form.

Hearing this, Viśvambhara embraced him.<sup>1</sup>

Viśvambhara once related an incident that had occurred on his way back from Gayā. While passing through the village of Hāṇḍīnāṭa-sālā, he encountered a dark boy (Kṛṣṇa). The boy had smiled at him and embraced him, and then fled. Viśvambhara had no idea where the boy had gone, but now he felt haunted by a sense of loss. As he narrated the story to his Vaiṣṇava companions, Viśvambhara must have been deeply affected by the memory of the incident, for, on completing the story, he swooned.<sup>2</sup>

On other occasions Viśvambhara asked Gadādhara where he might find Kṛṣṇa. "In your own heart", Gadādhara replied. Whereupon Viśvambhara was about to tear his own heart in a frantic effort to reach his Lord, but Gadādhara restrained and calmed him.<sup>3</sup>

Vṛdāvanadāsa's account of this phase in Viśvambhara's life is elaborate and almost free from supernatural incidents. On the whole he presents a logical sequence of events but in a few passages he is inclined

1. C-bhā Madhya II, 105-115.

2. Ibid., Madhya, II, 179-187.

3. Ibid., Madhya, II, 203-207.

to attribute supernatural power to Viśvambhara. Perhaps Vṛndāvanadāsa's best account of this phase is that given in his Caintanya-Bhāgavata, where Viśvambhara is depicted as an ordinary mortal endowed with extraordinarily intense bhakti for his Lord. Indeed so intense is Viśvambhara's religious fervour that other Vaiṣṇava bhaktas fall irresistibly under its spell and acknowledge Viśvambhara as their spiritual master.

Vṛndāvana's account of how Viśvambhara's relatives and friends came to visit him on his return from Gayā is natural and convincing.

Before leaving for Gayā, Viśvambhara's attitude towards Vaiṣṇavism had been apathetic. The intense devotional fervour he displayed on his return must, as Vṛndāvana records, have come as a very pleasant surprise indeed to the Vaiṣṇava community of Navadvīpa.

As we have already indicated, Vṛndāvana is often at pains to suggest that Viśvambhara is the Bhāgavat incarnate, [but not so clearly in this episode] because here he describes Viśvambhara as receiving and indeed even soliciting the blessings of the Vaiṣṇava community in order to gain Kṛṣṇa's favour. Vṛndāvana explains away this apparent inconsistency, by declaring that although being the Bhāgavat Himself, Viśvambhara humbly

solicited the blessings of the bhaktas in order to demonstrate how a true bhakta should conduct himself: i.e. as a humble seeker of Divine favour.

Vṛndāvana's account of Viśvambhara's ecstasy in the home of Sūklāmbhara Brahmacaṛī remains true to the bare outline of the event as it is presented by Murāri, but much detail has been added. This addition renders Vṛndāvana's account much more vivid. One concludes that Vṛndāvana must have taken great care in collecting material to reconstruct Viśvambhara's spiritual development.

Vṛndāvana's account of how Viśvambhara relinquished the teaching profession is impressive. The mutual affection between Viśvambhara and his students went deep and rendered all the more painful the breaking off of their relationship. Viśvambhara's demonstration of Samkīrtana to his students and his final injunctions to them suggest that Viśvambhara wished to convert them to Vaiṣṇavaism, though we have no evidence of whether, in fact, they were converted.

Vṛndāvana's account deviates from that of Murāri on one point: the length of time Viśvambhara spent as a teacher after his return from Gayā. Murāri states that he continued to teach for some considerable time: Vṛndāvana that he relinquished teaching after

only a few days. Whereas, Kavikarnāpūra states that Viśvambhara continued to teach for four months following the latter's visit to Gayā. Though Vṛndāvana's account of this phase is plausible and in general reliable, it would nevertheless appear evident from both accounts that Viśvambhara's new personality was not yet fully integrated. Thus on this particular point Murāri and Kavikarnāpūra's version may be the correct one. Possibly Vṛndāvana based this record on the strength of the legend that developed following Viśvambhara's passing.

Murāri Gupta and following him, most of the other biographers agree that Viśvambhara first introduced Saṅkīrtana. Vṛndāvana, on the other hand, implies that Kīrtanawas known to some Vaiṣṇavas of Navadvīpa prior to this. The apparent contradiction between these two accounts possibly suggests that Viśvambhara merely popularised the performance of Kīrtanā in the Navadvīpa area and rendered it a regular part of Vaiṣṇava worship there.

One feature of Vṛndāvana's account is startlingly original: his description of Viśvambhara's charitable services to lower orders. Such services on the part of a Brāhmaṇa would at that time have been regarded as reprehensible. It is therefore unlikely that Vṛndāvana



would have added his description of them, had he not fully believed in their authenticity, for in performing them Viśvambhara must have exposed both himself in particular and the Vaiṣṇava community in general to the opprobrium of the orthodox and in recording them Vṛndāvana ensured that that exposure continued. One is therefore forced to conclude that these acts of charity on the part of Viśvambhara were true and furthermore that they were deliberate. Their significance will become apparent later.

The position of the Vaiṣṇava community in Navadvīpa at the time of Viśvambhara's return from Gayā appears to have been weak. They seem to have suffered considerably from the constant attacks and insults of Pāṣaṇḍīs. Attempts have been made to persuade Viśvambhara to join their ranks, before he left for Gayā. These were probably made with some hope of success, since Viśvambhara's father had been a member of the Vaiṣṇava community. Viśvambhara's response had, however, been cold disdain. Now on his return he was more than willing to participate in their activities. The Vaiṣṇavas welcomed him with enthusiasm, for Viśvambhara had achieved a considerable reputation for scholarship. Since the attitude of scholars towards the Vaiṣṇava community was generally mocking and

satirical,<sup>1</sup> the addition of Viśvambhara to their ranks was regarded as a victory for their community and a vindication of their beliefs. But there was a further reason for Vaiṣṇava rejoicing: Śrī~~N~~āsa and his associates obviously saw in Viśvambhara a potential leader of considerable stature and an important source of converts.

It is obvious that Viśvambhara's threat to destroy the Pāṣaṇḍīs, if uttered at all, was not meant literally. Vṛndāvana probably intended his readers to understand that Viśvambhara threatened to defeat his opponents in argument. In any case, none of our sources contains any reference to Viśvambhara committing acts of violence against other sects, or encouraging his followers to do so. Such behaviour would be irreconcilable with his teachings.

We are told that some aspects of Viśvambhara's devotional fervour were viewed by the ignorant as symptoms of a mysterious malady, (possibly epilepsy), but Śrī~~N~~āsa, a devout bhakta, interpreted these symptoms as Prema-lakṣaṇam in an extreme form: i.e. "signs of love" or Prema-bhakti (Love-Devotion) in Mahā-bhakta-yoga.

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1. C-bhā~~ā~~di, XVI, 8-13.

There is some evidence that in early life Viśvambhara suffered occasional attacks of a disease resembling epilepsy, and if we are to interpret our sources in a completely rational spirit we may suggest that these attacks grew more frequent after his return from Gayā. But on this point rationalisation and interpretation may be misleading. In this case it is perhaps not so very important to know whether he had indeed epilepsy or not; what really counts is: whether he and his followers believed that he had epilepsy or not. Vṛndāvana's account suggest that the ignorant regarded Viśvambhara as an epileptic. Therefore his devotional fervour left them unmoved. But the Vaiṣṇavas like Śrīvāsa interpreted the same manifestations as an extreme form of Prema-bhakti. Hence on them the effect was absolutely overwhelming. This is the important point.

(iii)

Jayānanda omits almost all record of this phase in Viśvambhara's spiritual development.

(iv)

Locanadāsa follows Murāri almost completely. His only deviation from Murāri's account is in the nature of the agency by which Viśvambhara was informed that he was under Hari's influence.<sup>1</sup> Murāri states that he was informed by Devī,<sup>2</sup> Locana that he was informed by a celestial voice.

This deviation is symptomatic of a general tendency: Murāri's account is generally simple and natural; the later biographers' accounts tend to be more elaborate and to introduce supernatural elements. Thus in the later accounts Viśvambhara the man becomes obscured beneath Viśvambhara the saint.

(v)

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja is silent about this phase in Viśvambhara's life. Possibly he considered Vṛndāvana's account adequate.

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1. Locanadāsa, p. 87.

2. Kāṇḍa, ii.2.7-11.

## CHAPTER VII

### VIŚVAMBHARA'S SPIRITUAL LIFE

#### SECOND PHASE: A SERIES OF

#### Āveśa

i

#### The Varāhāveśa.

##### a) The evidence

##### I Murāri's version

Murāri Gupta relates how he and Viśvambhara once entered Murānri's temple. Viśvambhara became very emotional and wept incessantly. He twice said that he was being attacked by a great boar (Varāha). Then he got down on all fours; his eyes became red and round; he grunted like a boar; and then seized a jug in his teeth.

When asked to identify who he was, Murāri at first confessed his inability to do so and then Murāri, remembering a passage in The Gītā, said that he did know his identity. Viśvambhara then asked whether the Vedas knew Him, and Murāri replied that they had not the capacity to reveal Him. Viśvambhara then declared that according to the Vedas He had no arms or legs, but that as God Himself, He knew the truth of the Vedas. He

was Paramātmān (the Supreme Soul). He had no eyes, yet he could see, He had no ears, yet he could hear. None knew him, yet he was omniscient. He was Paramātmān.

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## II Vṛndāvana's version:-

One day after hearing a recital of several Ślōkas from the Viṣṇu-Sahasra-Nāma depicting the Great Varāha Incarnation (Varāhāvatāra) of Viṣṇu, Viśvambhara went to visit Murāri Gupta, and on the way he began to grunt like a boar. When he arrived at Murāri's home, Murāri respectfully greeted him, and then they proceeded to Murāri's Viṣṇu temple. Murāri was somewhat surprised to hear Viśvambhara chant 'Boar! Boar!', as they walked along. On entering the temple Viśvambhara saw a water jug and, getting down on all fours, he seized the jug in his teeth, suddenly and simultaneously assuming the form of a boar, which trotted about on its four hooves grunting. Murāri was dumbfounded. But the boar retained the power of human speech and addressed him reassuringly. There ensued a conversation, during which Viśvambhara informed Murāri that a certain Prakāśānanda, a Vedic scholar of considerable repute, who resided in Kāśī,

was at that very moment asserting that God never manifested Himself in human form and was being afflicted with leprosy for this blasphemy.

Vṛndāvanadāsa then concludes his account with a number of verses describing how Viṣṇu will punish unbelievers.<sup>1</sup>

### III Kavikarnapūra's version

Kavikarnapūra's version is exactly the same as that of Murāri except for one detail. Kavikarnapūra writes that during the Varāhaveśa Viśvambhara threw a pitcher to the ground.<sup>2</sup>

### IV

In Jayānanda's version Viśvambhara is given some camphor and betel nut by Murāri's wife and sleeps for a short while before visiting the temple. After assuming the form of a boar, Viśvambhara hurls a copper vessel over a high wall. This is such a fantastic feat of strength that witnessing it, Murāri faints. Whereupon Viśvambhara's Āveśa ends. Later Murāri recites some

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1. C-bhāMadhya, III, 18-53.

2. <sup>Maha</sup> Kāvya V. 15-21.

ślokas in praise of the Boar-Incarnation, delighting Viśvambhara by his eulogy and poetic skill.<sup>1</sup>

V. Kṛṣṇadāsakavirāja's account is brief. He merely records that Viśvambhara once entered a trance-like state in the home of Murāri Gupta and that during this trance (aveśa) he was possessed by the sentiment of the Great Boar (Varāha).<sup>2</sup>

b) Discussion

I. Murāri's version

The sole eye-witness account is that presented by Murāri and indeed he was the only witness of the incident at all. His version must, therefore, be the most reliable.

In essence Murāri's version is this. Once whilst visiting Murāri's private temple, Viśvambhara became very excited and twice declared that he was being attacked by a boar. This was presumably a vision, which was immediately followed by a trance-like state in which Viśvambhara behaved like a boar. Murāri indicates

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1. Jayānanda, p. 54.

2. C-C Ādi, XVII, 17.



this by picking out significant details. Viśvambhara got down on all fours: as a sign that he was possessed by the Boar. His eyes became red and round: he grunted and seized the jug in his teeth: in all respects he behaved as though he was the Boar.

Viśvambhara then asked Murāri to identify him and this Murāri finally managed to do on the strength of a recollection of a passage in the Gītā. This and the ensuing conversation is important: it reveals that both Viśvambhara and Murāri were thinking and acting in accordance with a literary conception; it further reveals that in Viśvambhara's case this view had penetrated particularly deep, for in his trance-like state his subconscious mind presumably controlled his conversation; furthermore it reveals that in Viśvambhara's subconscious mind the belief had taken root that he was indeed Para-mātman.

## II. Vṛndāvanadāsa's version.

Since Murāri's was the only eyewitness account, all deviations from it in Vṛndāvanadāsa's version must be put down either to hearsay or to Vṛndāvana's personal imagination.

The first deviation refers to Viśvambhara's

hearing a recital of part of the Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma before visiting Murāri. This must be attributed to hear-say. This does not, however, exclude the possibility that it is correct for it links up with the reference to the Gītā in Murāri's account and strengthens the view that both Viśvambhara and Murāri acted in accordance with ideas derived from literature. The second deviation is that Viśvambhara actually became a boar, or appeared to do so to Murāri Gupta. This must be attributed to Vṛndāvana's hagiographical intention.

The subject of the theological discussion between Viśvambhara and Murāri in Vṛndāvana's version is substantially the same as that in Murāri's: i.e. whether Brahmā or God ever manifested Himself in human form; but there is an important deviation. In Murāri's version Viśvambhara states that according to the Vedas he has no arms or legs: in Vṛndāvana's version, not the Vedas, but a renowned student of the Vedas, actually declares at the time of Viśvambhara's trance that Brahmā never manifested Himself in human form and the renowned scholar of the Vedas is immediately smitten with leprosy as a punishment.

This deviation is important: it implies that Viśvambhara's metamorphosis into the Great Boar and also his claim to be God incarnate have to be believed. Disbelief

will incur due punishment. That is, by the time Vṛndāvana was writing, the incident narrated by Murāri had already become trans-muted into an article of faith in Vaiṣṇarism.

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### III. The other versions

These versions follow with minor exaggerations and deviations the basic accounts presented either by Murāri or Vṛndāvana. It is interesting to note that Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja<sup>1</sup> records that Prakāśānanda<sup>1</sup>, the Vedic scholar mentioned by Vṛndāvana, was later converted by Viśvambhara, which implies that he recognised his error; and that Jayānanda suggests by his description of Viśvanbhara hurling the jug over the wall that during his trance Viśvambhara experienced a marked increase in physical strength.

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1. C-C Madhya, XXV.

(ii)

Balarāmāveśaa) The evidenceI. Murāri's version

Murāri records that Viśvambhara was possessed by Balarāma on two occasions. On the first occasion Viśvambhara had just finished teaching for the day when he experienced a vision of Balarāma, in which Balarāma demanded Palm wine in a deep voice. Thereupon Viśvambhara began to dance with his companions. They went to the home of Murāri Gupta, singing the glory of Hari as they went. On arriving at the house Viśvambhara demanded strong-scented wine, but was given only water. When he drank this, however, it produced all the signs of intoxication and he began to dance, smiling happily. He was by now possessed by Balarāma, and the Brāhmanas present began to worship him. Whilst in this trance-like state of possession (āveśa), Viśvambhara was able to push a Brāhman wrestler with such force with a single finger, that the wrestler was hurled backward to the ground some distance away. The state of trance persisted from morning till dusk.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Kaṇvaīi.14.1-9.

On the second occasion Viśvambhara had swooned several times. When he finally recovered, he requested Gadādhara in a faint voice to summon the Vaiṣṇavas. When they arrived, Ācāryya Ratna asked him what the matter was. Viśvambhara replied that he had seen Balarāma, whereupon Ācāryya Ratna again asked for a detailed account of what he had seen. Instead of complying with this request, Viśvambhara led them in silence to the spot where he had witnessed the vision of Balarāma. Once more he fell into a trance-like state in which he was Possessed by Balarāma, and began to dance. The Vaiṣṇavas began to dance as well, and to clap the rhythm with their hands. This Kīrtana of dancing and clapping continued throughout that day. During the afternoon the fragrance of <sup>Palm</sup> wine pervaded the air, delighting the dancing Vaiṣṇavas. Two of the Brāhmaṇas experienced visions. Śrīvāsa's brother, Śrīrāma, saw a host of lotus-eyed people clothed in white raiment. Their heads were white and on one ear they wore a lotus, whilst on the other they wore an ear-ring. And Vanamālī saw a golden club, the traditional weapon of Balarāma, lying on the floor. Viśvambhara danced the whole night through, and Nityānanda embraced him all the time he danced.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Kaṇḍāi.14.10-26.

## II. Vṛndāvanadāsa's version

Vṛndāvanadāsa also records two occasions on which Viśvambhara was possessed by Balarāma. The first occurred in Śrīvāsa's house for the express purpose of demonstrating the supernatural power of Nityānanda, whom the sect regarded as an incarnation of Balarāma. Viśvambhara sat down on a cushion, was possessed by Balarāma, and asked his disciples for wine. Then he asked Nityānanda to furnish him with a plough and club immediately. Nityānanda complied. Some of the disciples failed to perceive the plough and club, though a few declared that they could see them. Viśvambhara then made a second request for Palm wine. This threw the Vaiṣṇavas into a quandry. Finally they decided to give him Ganges water instead. Viśvambhara was satisfied and drank it off as if it were wine. Viśvambhara was now fully possessed by Balarāma and his disciples praised him. When he had recovered from this trance-like state of Possession, Viśvambhara humbly besought his disciples to tell them whether he had been at all offensive. Whereupon his disciples hastened to reassure him that, on the contrary, his behaviour during the trance had been most instructive.<sup>1</sup>

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1. C-bhā Madhya, V, 37-57.

On the second occasion Viśvambhara and Śrīvāsa were walking along a street in Navadvīpa, when they suddenly smelled/<sup>Palm</sup>wine from a nearby/<sup>Palm</sup>wine shop. Viśvambhara was instantly possessed by Balarāma and wished to enter the shop to buy some/<sup>Palm</sup>wine, but Śrīvāsa managed to dissuade him from doing so, by threatening to drown himself in the Ganges.<sup>1</sup>

### III. Kavikarnapūrṇ's testimony.

Kavikarnapūrṇ's account of these two possessions (āvesā) is in the main faithful to that of Murāri Gupta. There are 3 differences, all regarding the second occasion:

i) There was no need to send for Ācāryya Ratna. He and the other Vaiṣṇavas were already present.

ii) There is no mention of Nityānanda embracing Viśvambhara.

iii) Viśvambhara did not lead the Vaiṣṇavas to the scene of his vision of Balarāma: Ācāryya Ratna saw Viśvambhara "in the dress of Balarāma". Viśvambhara then became Possessed by Balarāma and began to dance.<sup>2</sup>

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1. C-bhāṣya Madhya, XXI, 30-42.

2. <sup>Mahā-</sup> Kāvya VIII, 19-50.

#### IV. Locanadāsa's testimony

In the main Locana's account agrees with Murāri's. The differences are these:--

i) On the first occasion Murāri states that Viśvambhara had a vision of Balarāma, who asked for wine in a deep voice: Locana states that Viśvambhara heard a celestial voice asking for wine.

ii) Murāri states that Viśvambhara was possessed by Balarāma: Locana that Viśvambhara assumed the appearance of Balarāma.

iii) Murāri states that Viśvambhara came to his house: Locana that Viśvambhara went to a place where Murāri and Ācāryya Ratna (who is not mentioned by Murāri) were present.

iv) On the second occasion when asked to describe Balarāma by Ācāryya Ratna, Viśvambhara did not do so according to Murāri: in Locana's version Viśvambhara describes Balarāma.

v) Murāri states that the trance persisted for a day and a night: Locana that it continued for 3 days.

vi) Murāri states that it was Śrīrāma, who witnessed the divine host: Locana that it was Śrīvāsa.

vii) Murāri states that Vanamālī saw a golden club,



Locana that he saw a golden figure.<sup>1</sup>

b) Discussion

I. Murāri's version

Murāri's account of the first occasion on which Viśvambhara was possessed by Balarāma is presumably compounded of hearsay and first-hand information.

His statement that Viśvambhara experienced a vision of Balarāma, who addressed him in a deep voice, is based on hearsay. Presumably it was reported to him by Viśrambhara himself, in which case we are bound to accept it as subjectively true.

In essence Murāri's account of the first possession is this. Viśvambhara had a vision of Balarāma. This threw him into a trance in which he was possessed by Balarāma and behaved as if he were Balarāma. The signs of this possession were:-

- i) requesting <sup>Palm</sup> wine, which is associated with Balarāma;
- ii) exhibiting signs of intoxication after consuming only water;
- iii) displaying remarkably increased strength, by hurling a wrestler some distance with a single finger.

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1. Locanadāsa, pp. 117-118.

Murāri's account of the second possession is presumably based on hearsay. But since Murāri was a contemporary of Viśvambhara, and since the story could have been reported to him quite soon after the event; there is no reason to doubt its authenticity.

The account abounds in significant detail:

i) Viśvambhara had swooned several times. Thus the likelihood of his swooning or passing into a trance-like state on a similar occasion was very strong.

ii) Viśvambhara spoke in a faint voice: he had difficulty in speaking. This is corroborated by what follows. He manages to get out only that he has seen Balarāma. When others press for details, he is unable to say more but leads them mutely to the spot where he had experienced the vision. This suggests to us that he was still in a condition of semi-trance.

iii) The scene of the vision affects him so powerfully that he again passes into a trance-like state, is possessed by Balarāma and begins to dance.

The remainder of the account is important. It suggests that through participation in the Kīrtana of dancing and rhythm clapping in the presence of Viśvambhara the others present were able to participate in varying degrees in Viśvambhara's mystic experience. All

of them apparently reported smelling the aroma of <sup>Palm</sup>wine and were delighted by it. Thus they were so deeply entranced, that their normal reactions were suspended. Two of the witnesses were indeed so deeply entranced that they too actually experienced mystic visions or hallucinations, one reporting that he had seen a host of divine beings, and the other that he had seen Balarām's club.

Thus Murāri's second account is extremely important. It demonstrates that Viśvambhara possessed the essential qualities of the Indian guru: he was not only able to experience mystic visions himself; he was also able to lead others to the same level of mystic experience; and like the guru, he did <sup>so</sup> ~~new~~ by a technique in which he was an adept: the Kīrtan<sup>a</sup> of dancing and rhythm-clapping.

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## II. Vṛndāvanadāsa's version.

Vṛndāvana's two accounts are based on hearsay. As he was, however, the son of Nārāyaṇī, the daughter of Śrīvāsa's brother it is probable that much of what Vṛndāvana records may<sup>t</sup> be authentic.

It will be noticed, however, that Vṛndāvana's accounts differ markedly from Murāri's. This need not

militate against their acceptance as authentic, since it is possible that Viśvambhara may have experienced several possessions by Balarāma. Our feeling is that these details, which accorded with similar details recorded by Murāri, must be accepted as authentic.

These details are:-

i) During the trance Viśvambhara asked <sup>Palm</sup> ~~for~~ wine, and was given water, which he drank as though it were Palm wine.

ii) During the trance some witnesses experienced hallucinations, reporting that they had seen a plough and club.

The details, which do not receive general support from Murāri, are:-

i) Viśvambhara's asking Nityānanda for a plough and club and being furnished with them.

ii) Vṛndāvana's first account mentions no stimulus. In both of Murāri's accounts a stimulus is mentioned: a vision of Balarāma; which precipitated the possession in Viśvambhara Vṛndāvana's first account suggests that Viśvambhara was able to enter a state of possession at will; i.e. no stimulus was required. Vṛndāvana's second account suggests that Viśvambhara could be sent into a state of possession in a public street by a strong

stimulus: the smell of/<sup>Palm</sup>wine; i.e. Viśvambhara had no control over his trance-like states; they occurred involuntarily. Vṛndāvana further suggests in his second account that Viśvambhara would so retain his faculties whilst in a trance-like state as to be open to persuasion by blackmail, the threat of suicide on the part of Vṛndāvana. These inconsistencies and implausibilities inherent in Vṛndāvana's accounts suggest that his testimony must be treated with caution.

It would appear that Vṛndāvana was deliberately remoulding his material in order to bring out the divinity of Nityānanda. He states that the express purpose of Viśvambhara entering into a state of possession at will in the home of Śrīvāsa was to reveal the divinity of Nityānanda. We doubt very much whether Viśvambhara could enter into such states at will. The evidence we have so far considered suggests that Viśvambhara's trances resulted from a stimulus. Vṛndāvana then states that Viśvambhara made two requests during his possession by Balarāma: one, he asked for/<sup>Palm</sup>wine and was given Ganges water; two, he asked for a plough and club and was given nothing. All saw him drink the water as if it were/<sup>Palm</sup>wine; only some saw him holding the plough and club. This vision granted to some indicates, according to Vṛndāvana,

the divinity of Nityānanda. We remain doubtful.

There is a further detail recorded by Vṛndāvana, which is not corroborated by Murāri. This is that after recovering from his trance Viśvambhara humbly beseeches his disciples whether he has caused any offence. If authentic, this detail is significant, for it suggests that Viśvambhara was unaware in his normal conscious state of the events that occurred during his trances. This could be most important, for it would then be possible for his subconscious mind to make statements during his trances that his conscious mind would deny: for example, he might declare in a trance-like state that he was Brahmā (as, in fact, Murāri records that he did during his Varāhāveśa), which he might later deny, when conscious. Thus in fact it would be possible to support his alleged role of man-God.

### III. The other versions

The other versions do not deserve detailed discussion. They are all obviously based on hearsay, and tend only to add weight to Murāri's accounts, though differing in minor details.

(iii)

Nṛsiṃha Aveśaa) The evidenceI. Murāri Gupta's testimony

One day Śrīvāsa had offered oblations to his ancestors and listened to a recital of the Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma. Viśvambhara, who was present at the time, was greatly affected by the sound of Harināma and became possessed by Nṛsiṃha. He dashed from the house in a blind fury holding a club. His appearance was so ferocious, that passers-by took to their heels in alarm. Thereupon Viśvambhara's fury subsided and, becoming quite subdued, sat down on a cushion, dropping the club. He then asked whether he had done any wrong in alarming people in this way. His disciples hastened to reassure him and told him that not he but they were to blame for what had happened, because his āveśa (possession) had been provoked by their evil thoughts.<sup>1</sup>

II. Vṛndāvana's testimony.

Vṛndāvana's account is brief. He states that Viśvambhara exhibited this Nṛsiṃha āveśa, since Nṛsiṃha

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1. Kaṇḍāii.11.6-12.

was an avatāra of Viṣṇu.<sup>1</sup>

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### III. Kavikarṇapūra's testimony.

Kavikarṇapūra's account implies that Viśvambhara was not only possessed by Nṛsiṃhaa, but also that he assumed the appearance of Nṛsiṃhaa.

In Kavikarṇapura's version of the conversation following the possession, the disciples reply that the master (Viśvambhara) could not possibly have done wrong, since He is the supreme judge of all and has the right to punish those who transgress against him.<sup>2</sup>

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### IV. Locanadāsa's testimony.

Locana's account is substantially the same as Murāri's, except that when asked if Viśvambhara had done any wrong, the disciples reply that the master cannot possibly do any wrong.<sup>3</sup>

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1. C-bhāṭi, XI, 6-12.

2. <sup>maḥā-</sup>Kavya VII, 82-85.

3. Locanadāsa, p. 112.



b) Discussion

I. Murāri's version

The basic account of this incident is obviously that of Murāri Gupta, which is either based on an eye-witness experience or upon contemporary hearsay. In view of Murāri's general reliability, we should say that its authenticity ought to be accepted.

The account differs from Murāri's accounts of the Varāha and Balarāma Āveśa in that the stimulus is not a vision but a recital of part of Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma. It will be recalled that Vṛndāvana claimed that a recital of another part of the same text had resulted in one of Viśvambhara's Varāhāveśas.

Murāri mentions that Viśvambhara held a club. Whether the club was real or illusory is not clear.

Murāri implies that Viśvambhara's trance ended, when he saw the people retreating in alarm. This and the following conversation suggests that Viśvambhara was not only aware of what others were doing during his trance but also remembered afterwards. The conversation suggests that Viśvambhara was disturbed by his own behaviour during the trance, which implies that whilst in a trance, even though he may afterwards have remembered what he had seen and done, he was unable to fully control his actions and

that this inability worried him, when the trance was over.

The reply of the disciples is not evidence. It is merely a report of a contemporary opinion. If it has any importance at all, it is this. Viśvambhara's contemporaries were interpreting Viśvambhara's actions in the light of their knowledge of Viṣṇu as derived from sacred literature; i.e. their literature informed them that Viṣṇu would be constantly reincarnated to punish the wicked and to establish dharma. They interpreted Viśvambhara's actions in the light of this information and addressed him accordingly.

## II. The other versions.

The other versions merely re-echo Murāri's account. The differences merely indicate how the opinion of Viśvambhara's contemporaries, that Viśvambhara was in fact, Viṣṇu, had strengthened in the interval of few years that separate Murāri's versions from the later ones.

(iv)

Sivāveśa

a) The evidence.

I. Murāri Gupta's testimony.

A ~~Saiva~~ singer once approached Viśvambhara, saluted him and then began to sing Śaiva songs. Viśvambhara became possessed by Śiva, climbed on the shoulders of the singer and began to dance, whilst at the same time singing the Praises of Rāma; and also blowing the horn (śṛṅga) and playing the tabor.<sup>1</sup>

## II. Vṛndāvanadāsa's testimony.

One day a Saivite singer came to Viśvambhara's house and began praising Lord Śiva, whilst playing on his drum. Viśvambhara became possessed by Lord Śiva. He climbed onto the singer's shoulders, and declared 'I am Śaṅkara'. Some witnesses experienced a vision of Viśvambhara with matted hair, blowing the horn and playing the drum of Śiva. When the trance ended Viśvambhara climbed down from the singer's shoulders and gave him alms.<sup>2</sup>

1. Kañācāii.11.13-20.

2. C-bhāMadhya, VIII, 96-103.

### III. Kavikarṇapura's testimony.

Kavikarṇapura states that Viśvambhar climbed to the Saivite singer's back during his trance presumably while he was lying down and danced there. There is no mention of Viśvambhara singing the praise of Rāma.<sup>1</sup>

### IV. Locanadāsa's testimony.

Locana's account is virtually the same as that of Murāri, except that Locana records that Viśvambhara sang the praises of Lord Śiva, when commanded to do so by Lord Śiva Himself.<sup>2</sup>

#### b) Discussion

##### I. Murāri's version

It is not clear whether this version is based upon an eye-witness experience or upon hearsay.

If the account is intended to be a record of what Murāri or his contemporaries actually saw and heard, then it is implausible. It is impossible to sing Rāma-gāna and blow a horn at the same time. If on the other hand the account is intended as a record of an hallucination

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1. ~~Mahā~~āvya VII, 86-90.

2. Locanadāsa, p. 112.

experienced either by Murāri or his contemporaries, then presumably we must accept it as a record of such an experience, for it would be subjectively true in that the witnesses actually believed that this is what they saw and heard.

There are features of the account which would incline us to reject the account as a piece of deliberate fabrication on the part of Murāri. Viśvambhara was, at the time of this account, a vaiṣṇava. A Śaiva<sup>o</sup> singer singing the praises of Śiva to Viśvambhara's face would be provocative. If, however, Viśvambhara could be described as possessed by Śiva, and playing the horn and tabor of Śiva, yet at the same time singing the praises of Rāma, on the very shoulders of a Śaiva<sup>o</sup> singer, then this description would be symbolic of the superiority of Vaiṣṇavaism to Saivism. We suggest that this was in fact the purpose which motivated Murāri Gupta to fabricate this story. The fabrication is not without importance, however: it suggests that Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas existed side by side, the former believing the superiority of Śiva, the latter of Viṣṇu.

## II. Vṛndāvana's version.

Vṛndāvana's version is either inspired <sup>by</sup> Murāri's or based on hearsay. As a description of a collective hallucination it is plausible. Its content is consistent with the caitanya legend in that, as Paramātmā, Viśvambhara would be equally entitled to describe himself as Saṁkara. It is also consistent with the portrait of Viśvambhara presented by Vṛndāvana, in that he could claim to be Saṁkara in a trance, even if he would deny the assertion when conscious. In short, Vṛndāvana's version neither adds to <sup>nor</sup> subtracts from what we already know except in regard to one detail. He excludes any reference to the Rāma-gāṇa. Now if, as we believe, Murāri's version is a fabrication, then this omission on the part of Vṛndāvana is significant: it demonstrates that the position of Vaiṣṇavism in Navadvīpa had strengthened to such an extent that either symbolic representations of its superiority are unnecessary or, since Viśvambhara is declaring that he is Saṁkara, Vaiṣṇavism is absorbing Saivite converts.

## III. Kavikarnapūra's version.

If Kavikarnapūra's account is a record of mass hallucination, then, of course, it must be accepted as subjectively true. We are inclined to reject the account

as imaginary.

The omission of any reference to the Rāma-gāṇa strengthens our conviction about the improvement in the status of Vaiṣṇavism in Navadvīpa.

#### IV. Locana's version.

Locana's version is based on that of Murāri. His statement that Lord Śiva commanded Viśvambhara to sing His Praises indicates some change in the relations of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism by the time of Locanadāsa. Either relations between the two sects were now cordial, or Vaiṣṇavism was absorbing still more former Śaivas, whose allegiance to the old sect was still sufficient for them to feel sensitive to possible affronts on their former faith.

## CHAPTER VIII

a) The attribution of supernatural power to Viśvambhara. b) The postulation of Buddhist influence.

In this Chapter we shall discuss three incidents in the life of Viśvambhara, in the final version of which supernatural power is attributed to him.

In the first, the story of the leper, he is alleged to possess the power to cure leprosy; in the second the power to disperse clouds; and in the third to accelerate the growth of trees.



## THE STORY OF THE LEPER.

### A. The Evidence.

#### I. Murāri Gupta's version

Viśvambhara came to the house of Śrīvāsa, holding a club, which he had just worshipped in order to punish the wicked. Śrīvāsa told him of a leper, who hated the Vaiṣṇavas. Viśvambhara promised to dispatch the leper to Hell for this wickedness and declared his intention to punish the leper's followers also.<sup>1</sup>

Some days later the leper and Viśvambhara met in the street. The leper saluted Viśvambhara, who, he declared, was popularly acknowledged as the Supreme Being, and besought Viśvambhara to save him.

Viśvambhara angrily treated the leper as a wicked reviler of the Vaiṣṇavas, and pronounced that, because of the leper's hatred of the Vaiṣṇavas, he would continue to suffer from leprosy during his next

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1. Kaṇḍa .ii.6.2-6.

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hundred births.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Viśvambhara declared, those loyal and obedient to the Vaiṣṇavas would continue to enjoy an easy passage through this world.

Viśvambhara then dismissed the man and went to Śrīvāsa's house, where he related the incident. Śrīvāsa suggested that since Viśvambhara had already converted such grievous sinners as Jagannātha and Mādhava, he ought to convert the leper also. Viśvambhara agreed to do so.<sup>2</sup>

## II. Vṛndāvana-dāsa's Version.

Vṛndāvana's version follows the broad outline of Murāri's, except that according to Vṛndāvana the leper visited Viśvambhara after his renunciation (Sannyāsa) in the home of Advaita Ācāryya in Śantipūra.

Viśvambhara explained to the leper that by

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1. No doubt this passage seems inconsistent with Murāri's acknowledgement of Viśvambhara as the Supreme Being. We can not avoid the suspicion that Murāri's experience was sparked off by some strange manifestation on the part of emotional mystic. If these words were uttered at all we must not believe it too literally since in the spur of a moment, impulsive Viśvambhara might well have uttered these words.

2. Kaṭacā. ii.13.6-17.

calumniating Śrīvāsa he had sinned. Thereupon the leper repented and asked Viśvambhara how his sin could be expiated. Moved by the leper's evident sincerity, Viśvambhara told him to go to Śrīvāsa and beg Śrīvāsa's forgiveness, which, when granted, would free him from sin. The leper did so.<sup>1</sup>

### III. Kavikarnapūra's Version.

Kavikarnapūra's version substantiates Murāri's.

### IV. Locanaḍāsa's Version.

Though in the main faithful to that of Murāri, Locana's version deviates on a few points.

Viśvambhara told the leper that had the leper's hatred been directed against himself, he could have borne it with equanimity. He would have felt himself obliged to save the leper, despite the leper's hatred, had the leper merely hated Viśvambhara himself, and not the Vaiṣṇavas. But to hate the Vaiṣṇavas was to incur Viśvambhara's hostility.

Hearing this the leper burst into tears of remorse. Viśvambhara then went to Śrīvāsa and told him

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1. C-bhāAntya, IV, 346-385.

that a man had contracted leprosy as a direct result of calumniating him (Śrīvāsa), adding that if Śrīvāsa were to forgive the leper, then the leper would undoubtedly be cured. Śrīvāsa replied that he himself was too insignificant a person to be able to effect such a cure. His forgiveness could only be the instrument through which the grace of Viśvambhara would cure the leper. In the full knowledge that this was the case, he nevertheless forgave the leper for all that the leper had done against him. At this Viśvambhara began to chant Harināma.

Meanwhile the leper had been cured. His body had become 'divine'. And he began to cry out Viśvambhara's name.

Viśvambhara took leave of Śrīvāsa and was on his way to see the leper, when they suddenly chanced to meet in the street. The leper made obeisance to Viśvambhara and touched his feet. Viśvambhara embraced him, thus bestowing upon him a rare mark of love. This sent the leper wild with emotion. The Vaiṣṇavas and the people of Navadvīpa experienced great delight in witnessing this scene.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Locanadāsa, op. cit., p. 115-116.

### V. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's Version.

In Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's version, a Brāhmaṇa named Gopāla Cāpāla, maliciously mocked Śrīvāsa's worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa by cleaning a place in front of Śrīvāsa's gate and placing there all the objects necessary for the worship of Śrī Bhavānī: china-roses (jabā), ~~Turneric~~, vermilion, sandal-paste and rice and also, as an act of desecration, a jug of palm wine! Three days later Gopāla Cāpāla contracted leprosy.

The leper found Viśvambhara sitting beneath a tree on the bank of the Ganges; addressed him as uncle on the strength of their common residence in the village; acknowledged that Viśvambhara was the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa; and begged Viśvambhara to free him from his wretched condition.

Viśvambhara was unmoved by the man's entreaties. He declared that he had no intention of freeing the man and that on the contrary the man would be eaten by worms for a million births in consequence of his malicious mockery of Śrīvāsa. The man would also suffer in the Hell of Raurava for the same period. Viśvambhara concluded by declaring that he had been incarnated to destroy the wicked and propagate devotion (Bhakti). He then took leave of the place.

Later ~~Cōpāla~~ Cōpāla visited Viśvambhara in the village of Kuliā after the latter's renunciation. Viśvambhara informed him that only the forgivingness of Śrīvāsa could free him from his sins. Accordingly the leper went to Śrīvāsa, begged his forgiveness, and, on receiving it, became released from sin and was cured from leprosy.<sup>1</sup>

## B. Discussion.

### I. Murāri's Version.

The incident, as narrated by Murāri, is vague: The leper is not named, nor is the cause of his leprosy.

But beneath this vague narration the following framework of beliefs is discernible:-

- i) A belief in some quarters that Viśvambhara was the Supreme Being.
- ii) Viśvambhara's belief (a) that he possessed the power to despatch sinners to hell;  
b) that sin consisted in hostility to Vaiṣṇavism and resulted in physical torment (leprosy etc.);  
and c) that virtue consisted in acceptance of Vaiṣṇavism and resulted in physical ease (freedom from leprosy etc.)

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1. C-C Ādi, XVII, 33-55.

iii) Śrīvāsa's belief that conversion to Vaiṣṇavism could cure the consequences of sin (leprosy).

## II. Vṛndāvana-dāsa's Version.

Vṛndāvana-dāsa's account is more specific. The leper remains unnamed, but the nature of his sin is stated: he had calumniated Śrīvāsa, a prominent Vaiṣṇava; and the means of expiation are also stated: obtaining Śrīvāsa's forgiveness.

Vṛndāvana alters the scene of the events to the home of Advaita Ācāryya, probably with the intention of exalting this saint.

## III. Locana's Version.

Locana's account stresses the nature of the sin: hatred of Vaiṣṇavism.

Viśvambhara states that he could have borne an attack upon himself with equanimity, but not upon his faith.

## IV. Kṛṣṇa-dāsa's Version.

Kṛṣṇa-dāsa Kavirāja's version is the most specific. He names the leper, and describes in detail the nature of the leper's sin.

Kṛṣṇa-dāsa also has Viśvambhara declare that he was incarnated to destroy the wicked and propagate Bhakti, i.e. Viśvambhara was aware of his identity with Kṛṣṇa and of the purpose of his descent to earth.



## GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.

Taken collectively, the narrations of this incident reveal that there was a group, evidently opposed to the development of the Vaiṣṇavas, which propagated slanders publicly. It is expected that they encouraged other sects. The opposition of this group became intolerable and Viśvambhara realised their continuous pressure should be faced boldly. He worshipped the 'Gadā' in the conventional manner to punish the opposition. That such a mild and gentle teacher should think of punishing his opponents is also interesting. We need not assume that Viśvambhara's threat to destroy the opponents, if it was uttered at all, was meant literally. Murāri Gupta probably only intended his readers to understand that Viśvambhara threatened to defeat his opponent in argument. In any case, none of our sources contains any reference to Viśvambhara committing acts of violence against other sects, or encouraging his followers to do so. Thus it is most likely that Viśvambhara merely wanted to defeat the opponents by arguments and that their defeat would be looked on as a sort of punishment.

Although Viśvambhara was recognised as an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, by his disciples, there were

evidently many people who could not believe in his identity with Lord Kṛṣṇa. In fact, if by that time Viśvambhara had then been generally accepted as an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa his opponents would hardly have shown such courage as to oppose him so openly. But it would seem the gradual development of Viśvambhara's spiritual life became the talk of the town, until at last the opposition group realised their mistake and subsequently came to Viśvambhara for pardon.

Murāri's description and following him Kavikarṇapūra, Vṛndāvanadāsa and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja do not state that the leper was cured from leprosy in a miraculous way; rather it suggests that Viśvambhara promised to save the leper from the sin which he committed as a result of his hatred for the Vaiṣṇavas. In contrast Locana states that the leper was cured miraculously from leprosy. We have shown in the previous chapter ~~of~~ how he deviates from Murāri's account in the nature of the agency by which Viśvambhara was informed that he was under Hari's influence. Murāri states that he was informed by Viśnupriyā Devī, Locana that he was informed by a celestial voice.

The leper's anxiety for a pardon was due, probably to a fear of the infernal sufferings which

he was expecting to encounter. Early religious texts allow no escape from the effects of Karma; in these sinners may be treated sympathetically but in no circumstances can they be saved from the torments of ~~the~~ Hell. But in some Vaiṣṇava sects we see a striking difference, the grace of God could set aside Karma and was sufficient, by God's grace, to efface any sin.

The strange reference to Gopāla Cāpāla in the description of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja is very interesting. Kṛṣṇadāsa states that ~~Gopāla~~ ~~Cāpāla~~ contracted leprosy throughout his whole body just three days after committing a crime against Śrīvāsa, whereas leprosy in fact, develops very slowly; there are no other records of such a rapid spread throughout a whole body. But Indians knew very well what leprosy (Kūṣṭha) was, it is clearly distinguished from different skin diseases. Therefore, the 'leper' of ~~the~~ incident was suffering indeed from leprosy. It is probable that this passage is a development on the part of Kṛṣṇadāsa himself of Murāri's account. Kṛṣṇadāsa must have felt that the description would be forceful if he introduce that ~~Gopāla~~ contracted leprosy within a period of only three days. We need <sup>not</sup> accept this statement too literally.

## VIŚVAMBHARA AND THE BANK OF CLOUDS

### A. The evidence

#### I. Murāri Gupta's version.

Whilst Viśvambhara and his devotees were performing Samkīrtana, a bank of thunder clouds appeared in the sky. The cloud threatened to end the performance. The devotees were saddened by this thought.

Viśvambhara began clanging the cymbals and began to sing the praises of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The clouds scattered before the winds. The moon appeared and Samkīrtana was resumed.<sup>1</sup>

#### II. Kavikarnapūra's version.

Kavikarnapūra repeats Murāri's account of the incident.

#### III. Locana-dāsa's version.

When clanging the cymbals to dispel the rain-clouds, Viśvambhara thought that he ought to look up at the sky to satisfy heaven. He did so and the clouds

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1. Kaṇḍā. ii.3.18-26.

disappeared.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. Kṛṣṇa-Dāsa Kavirāja's version.

Viśvambhara willed the clouds to disappear and they did so.<sup>2</sup>

#### Discussion and Conclusion.

Although the above description is simple, the hagiographer suggests that a miracle took place. But in point of fact Kīrtana took place on most days of the year and we have no reason for wonder if there was a cloud at a time when our Saint and his disciples were in a mood for performing Kīrtana. We know that clouds are not always followed by rain. On the other hand it is quite possible that the story is in fact a parable describing how the disciples' anxieties are removed by the Kīrtana. Viśvambhara himself started to sing, playing on a 'Mandirā' whereupon the clouds of gloom cast on the mind of the bhaktas disappeared and they recognised him as Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself.

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1. Loṇanadāsa, p. 91.

2. C-C Adi, XVII, 83.

## THE STORY OF THE MANGO TREE

### A. The evidence

#### I. Murāri Gupta's version.

Viśvambhara once discoursed to his disciples about the illusory nature of the world and all it contained. Nothing benefitted one, he said, except that which was done for God. He illustrated his discourse by referring to an "illusory seed", which produced an "illusory tree", which in turn produced "illusory fruit".<sup>1</sup>

#### II. Kavikarṇapūra's version.

Kavikarṇapūra's version substantiates Murāri's.

#### III. Locanaśāstra's version.

Viśvambhara took a mango stone and planted it. It developed immediately into a tree, whose fruits were picked and offered to God, whereupon the tree disappeared, leaving only the fruits, and thus illustrating the truth of Viśvambhara's discourse.

Viśvambhara then went on to say that he had created the world from illusion. Man failed to perceive die die

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1. Kaṇḍā ii.4.6-11.

the fact and thus they quarrelled among themselves. None could dispel the illusion. The only solution was for man to dedicate himself to the worship of Viśvambhara. Thus only could man fulfil himself.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. Kṛṣṇa-dāsa's version.

Once when tired out after a prolonged performance of Samkīrtana, Viśvambhara refreshed himself and his companions by planting a mango-stone, which immediately grew into a tree and brought forth two hundred succulent mangoes. Each of which was a meal in itself and full of nectar-like juice.

Viśvambhara washed the fruits, which he offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thereafter they were eaten by his devotees.

The tree bore fruit each day and was similarly enjoyed by Viśvambhara and his disciples after performing Samkīrtana.

Nobody but Viśvambhara and his disciples knew of the tree.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Locanadāsa, p. 93.

2. C-C Ādi, XVII, 73-81.

## B. Discussion.

This incident does not require detailed discussions. The evolution of the story through the four versions is obvious. The story began as a parable probably indicating that man, like a tree, is doomed to an unending cycle of birth, growth and rebirth; unless his fruits (his acts) are dedicated to God, in which case alone they will acquire significance. Gradually the parable is transformed into a stupendous miracle wrought by the power of Viśvambhara.

As far as we are concerned, however, the importance of the story is twofold: first, like those of the rain-clouds, and the leper, it illustrates how Viśvambhara was gradually endowed with supernatural powers by his biographers. Secondly, there is, however, one more indication for the tendency on the part of some of Caitanya's biographers to gain acceptance for Viśvambhara as an incarnation of Viṣṇu.

In order to achieve this aim, the biographers generally accentuated parallels between the behaviour of Caitanya and that of Śrīkṛṣṇa or between the attributes of Caitanya and those of Viṣṇu. But since the Buddha<sup>1</sup>

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1. C-bhāṭi, II, 174.



had, at the time of the composition of these biographies, been accepted as one of the tenth avatāras of Viṣṇu, there was no reason why similarities and parallels between the lives of the Buddha and Caitanya should not also be accentuated for the same purpose.

In our view, this story of <sup>the</sup> Mango-stone is evidence that the biographers were consciously pursuing this purpose. There is a similar story<sup>1</sup> in which Lord Buddha causes a mango-stone to grow in an instant into a tree, with fruit on it. Although Lord Buddha's motives were quite different from those of Caitanya - he merely wanted to prove his power to perform miracles - the similarities of the details in the two stories are striking.

Buddhism was widespread in Bengal in pre-Muslim times and the story of the miracle of Śrāvastī must then have been very popular. Possibly it was transmitted in some form or other in folktale or legend, and thus reappears long after the disappearance of Buddhism from Bengal.

Had this been the sole parallel between the

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1. The Life of Buddha as Legend and History, Edward J. Thomas, pp. 113-114; A. Foucher, The Life of the Buddha, p. 210.

alleged behaviour of Caitanya and the Buddha, it might have been dismissed as fortuitous. But the postulation of Buddhist influence is suggested by similar parallels in other places between the accounts of Caitanya's life and the stories of Lord Buddha. For instance: (i) Before the birth of the Buddha and Caitanya their respective mothers dreamed of celestial beings paying homage to them after their conception. (ii) Both received obeisance from one of their parents after becoming saints. (Lord Buddha received obeisance from his father Suddhodana,<sup>1</sup> and Caitanya from his mother Śacī Devī.<sup>2</sup> (iii) Both were consulted by kings about military operations.

According to Jayānanda<sup>3</sup> King Pratāparudra Deva of Orissa consulted Caitanya about invading Bengal. Caitanya discouraged the King, prophesying that this war would bring disaster to the people of Orissa.

A similar story<sup>4</sup> occurs in the life of Lord Buddha who was consulted by Vassakāra<sup>(sk)</sup>, the minister of

1. E.J. Thomas, The Life of Buddha as Legend and History, pp. 98-99; A. Foucher, The Life of the Buddha, pp. 174-175.

2. Nāṭaka, Act 1, p. 22.

3. Jayānanda, p. VII (introduction).

4. Vinaya Piṭaka, i.228; Udāna (Pāli Text Society), VIII, 6.

(sic)  
King Ajātasattu, when the latter was contemplating war against the Licchavis. The answer of the Buddha was ambiguous, however, whereas in this story Caitanya is described as positively discouraging the King from war.

There may even be others that have escaped our notice. Furthermore, Vṛndāvanadāsa even identifies Caitanya with the Buddha, stating that in his incarnation as Lord Buddha, Caitanya manifested kindness and religion to mankind. Thus we are convinced that these parallels are not fortuitous.

It has always been assumed that Buddhism disappeared from Bengal after A.D. 1200, when their monasteries were sacked by the invading Muslims. Smaller establishments may have survived till fairly late. Buddhists ideas disappeared when other cults absorbed them. The above parallels indicate how some Buddhist stories were absorbed by the Caitanya cult. This would suggest to us that Buddhists, too, may have been converted to the movement. The biographies furnish no evidence to support this contention, as far as Bengal itself is concerned, but Kavikarṇapūra<sup>1</sup> and, following him, Kṛṣṇadāsa

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1. Nāṭaka, Act VII, pp. 133-134.

Kavirāja<sup>1</sup> records how some Buddhist were converted in Southern India.

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1. C-C Madhya, IX, 38-56.

## CHAPTER IX

### CAITANYA AND GAJAPATI PRATĀPARUDRA

#### DEVA OF ORISSA

#### A. The evidence

##### I. Kavikarnāpūra's version

Presumably King Pratāparudra Deva learned of Śrīkṛṣṇa-Caitanya's visit to Mīlācala<sup>and</sup> of the profound impression he had made upon his subjects there, and even of his having converted Sārvabhauma, one of the most eminent scholars of the time, to his new faith, the King became eager to have audience with the young ascetic. Accordingly Sārvabhauma was summoned to His Majesty's presence and commanded to arrange an audience. But Sārvabhauma declared such<sup>an</sup> audience impossible: firstly, Caitanya had left Orissa on his way to the Deccan;<sup>1</sup> and secondly Caitanya would grant<sup>an</sup> audience only to the humble. In the course of the conversation the King learned to his surprise that Sārvabhauma was convinced of the godhead of Caitanya.

Some time later the King heard reports of how

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1. Nāṭaka, Act VII, p. 124.

Caitanya, whilst in ~~Kūṛma~~ Kṣetra in the Deccan, had cured a certain Vāsudeva of leprosy by merely embracing him.<sup>1</sup>

When Caitanya returned to Purī,<sup>2</sup> the King urged Sārvabhauma to intercede on his behalf and to try to gain him an audience with Caitanya. Sārvabhauma complied, but, when informed of the King's request, Caitanya put his hands over his ears, declaring that he had renounced the world and that having done so he could have no further dealings with the worldly. The company of Kings, added Caitanya, is poison to a Sannyāsī: it jeopardises his spiritual quest.

But King Pratāparūdra is not like other kings, argued Sārvabhauma: he was pure of heart and dedicated to Jagannātha. A King remains a King, protested Caitanya, no matter what his attitudes and convictions may be; and the true Sannyāsī must scorn his company. Indeed it is wrong for a Sannyāsī even to look at a worldly man or woman, or even at the image of such. For just as a snake or an object resembling a snake brings terror to the heart of an ordinary man, so does a King at someone

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1. Nāṭaka, Act VII, pp. 126-127.

2. Ibid., pp. 135-136.

resembling a King to the heart of a Sannyāsī.<sup>1</sup>

Thus silenced by this threat, Sārvabhauma reported his failure to the King. Deeply disappointed the King observed that even the most humble of his subjects could gain access to Caitanya, whilst he alone was debarred. It would seem that God had descended in human form to save all but him.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, this set-back strengthened, rather than weakened, his resolve to see Caitanya. His devotion was such that either he would see Caitanya, or die in the attempt.

Sārvabhauma was in a dilemma, as he was moved by the King's sincerity. He consoled the King by suggesting a way to visit Viśvambhara. During the Car festival (Ratha Yātrā), Viśvambhara would dance with his companions before the Car (Ratha), and when tired, would rest in a secluded grove. Wearing ordinary clothes, the King should visit him then.<sup>3</sup>

Thus Pratāparudra came to Mīlācala from Cuttack to see Viśvambhara at the Ratha Yātrā. By the time the Ratha reached Valagandī, Viśvambhara was tired and

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1. Nāṭaka, Act VII, pp. 145-146.

2. Nāṭaka, Act VII, pp. op. cit. 147-148.

3. Ibid., Act VII, p. 148.

entered a grove to rest. Pratāparudra according to the directions of Sārvabhauma, put aside his royal dress and ornaments, and wearing plain white clothes went into the grove... The disciples were sitting beneath the trees. The entry of the King, dressed as a devotee, surprised them, but they remained silent. The King crept upto Viśvambhara soundlessly so as not to disturb him.

Tears of joy were still pouring down Viśvanbhara's cheeks as a result of his ecstasy in witnessing the Car festival. The sight of such joy moved the King and he clasped Viśvambhara's feet firmly. Viśvambhara's eyes remained closed and thus he was unaware of the identity of his visitor, but pleased by his fervour, he embraced the King and recited some Slokas from the Bhāgavata again and again.<sup>1</sup>

Pratāparudra learnt that Viśvambhara was about to leave Nīlācala for Vṛndāvana. This news saddened the King, who asked Sārvabhauma why he and Rāmānanda were allowing Viśvambhara to leave Nīlācala. Sārvabhauma replied that he had tried to dissuade him, but Viśvambhara would not listen. Rāmānanda accompanied Viśvambhara as far as Bhadraka. He then returned to Pratāparudra and gave him

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1. Nāṭaka, VIII, pp. 158-159.



an account of the rest of Viśvambhara's journey from the men appointed by Rāmānanda to accompany Viśvambhara beyond Bhadraka. Viśvambhara did not, on this occasion, get as far as Vṛndāvana, but only to Gauṇḍa and other intermediary places. Pratāparudra was exceedingly delighted to hear of Viśvambhara's return to Mīlācala.<sup>1</sup>

Pratāparudra told his priest of his intention to witness the bathing festival (Snāna-Jātrā) from the balcony of his palace since he would have a glimpse of Viśvambhara if he attended the festival. The King requested Kāśī Misra to bring the bhaktas from Gauṇḍa to the balcony so that the bhaktas and his relatives could witness the bathing festival from there. The King pointed Viśvambhara out to the Queen and they both saluted him from the balcony. The bathing festival commenced. Viśvambhara was greatly moved by it and his eyes streamed with tears of joy. It was a custom for Jagannātha to remain in seclusion for fifteen days after the festival. The King learnt from one of his informants that this seclusion grieved Viśvambhara. A Kīrtana party was arranged under the direction of Svarūpadāmodara, so that Viśvambhara might forget his

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1. Kāṭaka, Act IX, pp. 166-177.

sorrow. The King and Kāśī Misra witnessed the Kīrtana from the balcony.<sup>1</sup>

During the Car procession (Ratha-Jātrā) Iratā-parudra told Kāśī Misra that he wanted to see Viśvambhara's dance before the Ratha (Car). He said that he would not be satisfied to see it from the palace. He added that during the Kīrtana he would stand behind the bhaktas, and if he were lucky, he might manage to catch a glimpse of Viśvambhara.

The queens watched the festival from the balcony, and the King and his minister Haricandana from behind the bhaktas, none of whom were aware of His Majesty's presence. The King became anxious as he could not see Viśvambhara. Haricandana pushed Śrīvāsa in order to attract his attention to the presence of the King. Śrīvāsa was disturbed at being pushed. He became angry and slapped Haricandana. The King feared lest Haricandana might rebuke Śrīvāsa, so he told him that he (the Minister) was blessed, since he had been touched by one of the disciples of Viśvambhara. He himself, continued the King, would esteem it a great favour if he had been slapped by Śrīvāsa. He then

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1. Mātaka, Act X, pp. 187-193.

warned his Minister not to do anything.

During the Kīrtana the Queens caught a glimpse of Viśvambhara, who was by then covered in dust and sweat as the result of dancing, which eventually caused him to swoon in ecstasy.<sup>1</sup>

Kavikarṇapūra's account of Viśvambhara's encounter with King Pratāparudra given in his Mahā-kāvya is substantially the same as that given in his Nāṭaka, except that Viśvambhara addresses King Pratāparudra as 'Rudradeva', when he visits him in the secluded grove. In the Nāṭaka the Saint does not recognize the King, who is dressed as an ordinary man. The drama was intended for performance before the King himself, and Pratāparudra would hardly have allowed this rather derogatory account to remain if it had not been true. Possibly the only citation of the King's name by Viśvambhara in this connection is due to an early copyist's error, or indeed it may be due to the exigencies of the metre.

Viśvambhara went to Cuttack to visit temples. He was invited as a guest to the house of one Brāhmaṇa named Svapneśvara. Rāmānanda reported to the King about Viśvambhara's arrival. Pratāparudra and Rāmānanda

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1. Nāṭaka, Act X, pp. 194-202.

mounted elephants and reached the grove where Viśvanbhara was resting. Pratāparudra alighted from the elephant and stealthily walked towards Viśvanbhara. The King shed tears at the sight of Viśvanbhara; he fell down on the ground and saluted him in various ways. Deeply moved, Viśvanbhara embraced him and spoke sweetly to him.

According to the Mahākāvya, Pratāparudra later ordered that a memorial pillar should be erected to mark the place from where Viśvanbhara would cross the river Āitratpala, as holy. Rāmānanda accompanied Viśvanbhara up to Bhadrēśvara; Pratāparudra wrote to his officers that they should do all in their power to facilitate Viśvanbhara's journey. The King's subjects obeyed his order by erecting a pillar and worshipped Viśvanbhara when the latter got into the boat.

## II. Murāri Gupta's version

Murāri Gupta's version is brief. He states that Pratāparudra's conversion followed Viśvanbhara's return to Nīlācala from Vṛndāvana. It resulted from the combined efforts of Kityānanda and Viśvanbhara. Pratāparudra is said to have dreamt of Viśvanbhara three times. On the third occasion the ling was so

eager to see Viśvambhara in the flesh, that he rose there and then and went to him. He clapped Viśvambhara's feet and eulogised him. Viśvambhara was pleased and appeared to the King in the form of a six-armed deity.<sup>1</sup>

### III. Vṛndāvanadāsa's version

When Caitanya arrived in Mīlācala, King Pratāparudra was away on a campaign against the King of Vijaya Nagara.<sup>2</sup> On the conclusion of this war, King Pratāparudra came to Mīlācala from Cuttack, with the express purpose of seeing Caitanya. The King begged Sārvabhauma and other disciples of Caitanya to arrange an audience with the young Saint, but they refused even to try, well knowing that Caitanya scorned the company of the worldly.

Nevertheless, they were moved by the King's sincere devotion, and suggested to him that he should contrive to catch a glimpse of Viśvambhara during the Car festival from a place of concealment, since Viśvambhara would at that time become totally oblivious to the outside world and would thus fail to sense the presence

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1. Rāṇacā IV. 16. 1-20.

2. C-bhāntya, III, 269-270.

of the King. The King did as they suggested and one day he actually witnessed Viśvambharā's dancing and ecstasies. Nevertheless, King Pratāparudra remained doubtful of Viśvambhara's godhead. During a dream that very night he had a vision of Jagannātha, covered in dust, exactly as Viśvambhara had been, when he last saw him. This convinced Pratāparudra that Viśvambhara was none other than Jagannātha Himself, and he was filled with remorse at the thought of his earlier scepticism with regard to Viśvambhara's godhead. This dream intensified his desire to have an audience with Viśvambhara and he begged the bhaktas again and again to try to bring this about. But Viśvambhara remained adamant in his refusal to see the King. A few days later Viśvambhara was sitting with his disciples in a grove when the King approached him and clasped his feet. So intense was the King's emotion that he fainted with joy. Viśvambhara was deeply moved and touched the King, urging him to rise. The king recovered and began to weep still clasping Viśvambhara's feet, and praising his divinity. Viśvambhara told him to devote himself to Kṛṣṇa and to sing Kṛṣṇa-saṁkīrtana. He further said that he had come to Nīlācal for the sake of Rāya Rāmānanda, Jārva-bhauma and Pratāparudra. Viśvambhara asked him not to

propagate his fame, otherwise he would leave Nīlācala. Saying this he presented his garland to the King and said good-bye.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's version

The opening passages of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's account follow those of Kavikarṇapūra, with the exception that, when informed of Caitanya's refusal even to see him, King Pratāparudra declares if all his attempts to gain the desired audience fail, then he will renounce the world and become an ascetic himself.<sup>2</sup>

This declaration alarms Sārvabhauma and he informs the other disciples of it. Sārvabhauma, Nityānanda, and the other bhaktas then go and tell Caitanya of the extent of the King's devotion. Though pleased to hear of it, Caitanya persists in his refusal to grant an audience, adding that were he to grant one, Svarūpa Dāmodara would censure him. Without the consent of Svarūpa Dāmodara, an audience with the King was impossible, Caitanya stated.

But Svarūpa Dāmodara replied that he had no

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1. C-bhāAntya, V, 139-205.

2. C-C Madhya, XI, 32-39.

power to dictate how Caitanya should or should not behave, Since Caitanya was God incarnate and was himself the judge of what was and was not proper for him to do. As far as Svarūpa himself was concerned, he would be delighted if an audience between Caitanya and King Pratāparudra were to take place. The King truly loved Caitanya, and Svarūpa felt that Caitanya would be compelled by the very force of that love to embrace the King, for if Caitanya was subject to any power, it was the power of love.<sup>1</sup>

Then Nityānanda suggested to Caitanya that the King might be pleased to receive an article of Caitanya's clothings. To this Caitanya agreed and accordingly Sārvabhauma presented one of Caitanya's dhutī to the King, who worshipped it as reverently as if it were Caitanya himself.<sup>2</sup>

The King then requested his Minister, Ray Rāmānanda, to intercede with Caitanya on his behalf, whenever a favourable opportunity arose. Accordingly Rāmānanda spoke to Caitanya of the King's love for him and succeeded in softening Caitanya's heart. Nevertheless,

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1. C-C Nādhya, XII, 10-26.

2. Ibid., 27-35.



Caitanya refused to grant an audience for the reasons ~~as~~ he had given to Sārvabhauma. But Caitanya was God incarnate, Rāmānanda argued, as such he need fear no one. As a Sannyāsī, Caitanya countered, his conduct must remain above reproach: the slightest deviation from his chosen path would <sup>not</sup> escape public notice and comment, <sup>any more</sup> ~~no better~~ <sup>an</sup> than ink-mark on a white cloth. Caitanya had redeemed numerous sinners, Rāmānanda stated: why should he not also redeem King Pratāparudra, who was his sincere devotee? One drop of palm wine spoils a whole jar of milk, Caitanya replied; similarly, the title of King pollutes Pratāparudra Deva, despite his many virtues. Caitanya conceded, however, that he would be willing to grant an audience to the Prince, though not to the King; for as the scriptures say: "A son is one's own self born again"; thus an audience with the son is equivalent to one with the father.

Rāmānanda reported this to the King and then brought the Prince to Caitanya. The Prince was handsome and of a dark complexion. He reminded Caitanya of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and Caitanya embraced him lovingly. Caitanya told the Prince that he was virtuous and that since he resembled Lord Kṛṣṇa, his embrace was like a blessing. Whilst in Caitany's embrace, the Prince began to tremble,

perspire, and weep; and to dance, chanting Kṛṣṇa's name. Caitanya asked him to come every day. The King was pleased to hear of his son's meeting with Caitanya and when he embraced his son, he felt as if he were embracing Caitanya.<sup>1</sup>

The intensity of the King's devotion to Caitanya delighted Sārvabhauma, who suggested to the King a plan whereby the King might gain access to Caitanya. Caitanya was bound to dance before the Car (Ratha) during the car festival (Ratha-Yātrā). When he was tired, he would retire to a garden to rest, and be oblivious to all about him. The King should take opportunity of going to him. He should be dressed in a plain white robe and recite the Kṛṣṇa-Rāsa-Pañcādyāyī from the Bhāgavata. These sweet verses never fail to move Caitanya. Full of emotion, Caitanya would embrace the King, on the assumption that he were an ordinary Vaiṣṇava.<sup>2</sup>

On the day of car festival, Caitanya was moved at seeing the King sweep the path of the car with his own hands and felt an impulse to bestow a mark of his

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1. C-C Madhya, III, 58-64.

2. C-C Madhya, III, 40-47.

favour upon his Majesty.<sup>1</sup> Caitanya began to dance and, moving along with the procession, approached the King. He was just about to swoon in ecstasy, when the King caught him. This touch of a worldly person, the King, immediately restored Caitanya to his senses and he cried shame upon himself at having been touched by such a man. Actually within his heart Caitanya was pleased by the King's humble service to Jagannātha, but he is alleged to have created this situation to warn his disciples against consorting with the worldly.<sup>2</sup>

As soon as the Car reached Valagandī, Caitanya ceased dancing, entered the garden, and completely overcome with devotion rested on the Vāraṇḍā of a garden house. He was perspiring with the exertions of the dance and enjoyed the cool breeze. His disciples came and rested beneath the trees.<sup>3</sup> Then the King came. He was alone and dressed in plain white like an ordinary Vaiṣṇava, in accordance with Sārvabhauma's instructions. First of all he politely sought the permission of the disciples for what he was about to do. Then mastering

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1. C-C Madhya, XIII, 14-17.

2. Ibid., 172-179.

3. Ibid., 185-196.

his courage he clasped Caitanya's feet.

Caitanya's eyes were closed. The King caressed his feet and recited the Rāsa dance stanzas. The sweet verses filled Caitanya with boundless joy. He rose and embraced the King, saying that he had been given much but had ~~nothing~~ to give in return except this embrace. So saying, he embraced the King without asking his identity, although in his heart he knew who the visitor was. Then when he asked the name and background of his visitor, the King replied that he was the slave of Caitanya's slaves and added his only desire was to be the servant of his servants. The sincerity of the King's devotion moved Caitanya to grant him a vision of his own godhead. The King was afterwards asked to keep secret the fact of Caitanya's godhead.<sup>1</sup>

Kṛṣṇadāsa continues that Caitanya went to Cuttaka and visited Gopāla (Sākṣī Gopāla). A Brāhmāṇa named Svapneśvara invited Viśvambhara to be his guest; the Brāhmāṇa also invited some of the disciples including Rāmānanda. Rāmānanda announced Viśvambhara's arrival to the King, who was overjoyed to hear the news and came to Viśvambhara. The King saluted and praised

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1. C-C Madhya, XIV, 3-17.

Viśvambhara. Viśvambhara was pleased by his devotion and embraced him with unfeigned affection. The King was bathed by Viśvambhara's tears of joy. Thus Viśvambhara, became famous as the 'Saviour of Pratāparudradeva'.<sup>1</sup>

The King wrote letters to the royal officers of the territories through which Viśvambhara would pass on his visit to Gaurā, and asked them to do their best for Viśvambhara's convenience. The King asked his Minister to bring a new boat so that Viśvambhara might cross the river ~~Chitratpala~~ and ordered a memorial pillar to be erected at the spot where he would ~~cross~~. The King also ordered the construction of a sacred ghāṭa at the place where Viśvambhara had bathed in the river. He said that he would count it a great favour if he could die there. Finally he told his men to build a house (for the residence of Sannyāsī) at Caturdvāra to commemorate the event.

The King came to know that Viśvambhara was going to start for Gauṇ in the evening. Canopies were put on the elephants and the Queens mounted them.

The elephants stood in a row along the way which Viśvambhara would follow, so that the Queens would see

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1. C-C Mahdya, XVI, 99-107.

him. Accordingly Viśvambhara came with his disciples in the evening and bathed in the river. The queens saw him and saluted Viśvambhara from beneath their canopies. Everybody became happy at the sight of Viśvambhara.<sup>1</sup>

#### V. Jayānanda's Testimony

Viśvambhara went to Cuttack to do a favour to Pratāparudra.<sup>2</sup> On the way he encountered Pratāparudra who was sitting on an elephant. The elephant stopped and saluted Viśvambhara with its trunk. The King was surprised at this and alighted from the elephant. He told Viśvambhara that he was preoccupied with worldly affairs and requested him to help him. Viśvambhara said that at the command of Jagannātha he had come there with this aim. Viśvambhara told the King that he was pleased with him because his subjects were happy under his rule. The King said that this was an auspicious moment since his private temple was going to be visited by the living Jagannātha.

With the King was Candrakalā, the Pātāṇī

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1. C-C Madhya, XVI, 109-119.

2. Jayānanda, p. 100.

(Principal Queen). She worshipped Viśvambhara and Nityānanda and offered valuable jewels at their feet. Viśvambhara gave her his own garland and recited a Gaura-mantra, in honour of Kṛṣṇa before her.<sup>1</sup>

Jayānanda further writes that after hearing from Sārvabhauma about the supernatural power of Viśvambhara the King went to Nīlācala to see him during the bathing festival of Jagannātha. Tears rolled down his cheeks on seeing the teacher's ecstasies. Viśvambhara took the form of an eight-armed deity when Pratāparudra saw him and both the King and Queen fainted at the sight.<sup>2</sup>

Pratāparudra consulted Viśvambhara about invading Bengal. Viśvambhara discouraged the King, prophesying that this war would bring a disaster to the people of Orissa.<sup>3</sup>

We can hardly believe that Viśvambhara went to Cuttack especially to favour Pratāparudra, when we have already seen that at first he refused an audience with the King. Either Jayānanda's story of the first meeting or the accounts of most other sources about

1. Jayānanda, p. 103.

2. Ibid., pp. 125-26.

3. Ibid., p. VII (Introduction).

Viśvambhara's reluctance to see the King must evidently be false. We doubt the genuineness of Jayānanda's story, since it conflicts with those of earlier and more reliable sources. Moreover, we have no evidence elsewhere of Viśvambhara receiving jewels from his bhaktas. The story that Viśvambhara gave his own garland to the queen seems to be based on Jayānanda's personal imagination since it contradicts Viśvambhara's character in respect of his detachment from women. Moreover, Jayānanda contradicts himself as he first states that Viśvambhara met the King on the way to Cuttack and later writes that only on hearing from Śārvabhauma did the King come to Nīlācala where he and the queen saw Viśvambhara's supernatural shape as an eight-armed deity. The earlier sources describe the King as going alone to Nīlācala whereas Jayānanda introduces the Queen into the scene. We can only assume that this was done to make the story more attractive, and has no basis of truth.

According to Jayānanda Viśvambhara showed his supernatural power to the King at the bathing festival of Jagannātha whereas Kavikarṇapūra and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja mention that the encounter between the King and Viśvambhara took place during a Ratha (Car) Festival.

It is difficult to believe the authenticity



of the story of the King's consultation with Viśvambhara about invading Bengal, since no early biographers mention this, although it is likely that Viśvambhara was well aware of the military strength of *Kuseṇa-sāha* of Bengal. We may assume that Viśvambhara was pleased with the benevolent activities of *Kuseṇa-sāha*. Thus if there was an actual consultation Viśvambhara's advice would no doubt have been that which Jayānanda attributes to him. It is just possible that some Buddhist traditions were still remembered at the time since a similar story occurs in the life of the Lord Buddha who was consulted by Vassakāra, <sup>(sic)</sup> the Minister of King Ajātasattu <sup>(sic)</sup> when the latter was contemplating war against the Licchavis. The answer of the Buddha was ambiguous, however, whereas in this story Viśvambhara is described as positively discouraging the King from war.

#### VI. Locanadāsa's version

Pratāparudra Deva heard it rumoured amongst his subjects that Caitanya was God incarnate. Some time later when visiting the temple of Lord Jagannātha, he found Jagannātha in the dress of a Sannyāsī. This convinced him that the rumour about Caitanya was true. Caitanya then appeared to him in the form of an eight-

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1. See above p. 198 note. 3.

armed deity. The rest of Locana's account broadly follows that of Kavikarnapūra, except that Locana attributes the arranging of the audience between the King and Viśvambhara to Purī Gosvāmīn, and not Sārvabhauma or Rāmānanda.<sup>1</sup>

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Kavikarnapūra is more logical in telling of the King's interview. His description implies that the King had some doubts about the godhead of Viśvambhara. However, Kavikarnapūra introduced certain events into his story to effect a change in the King's attitude. Sārvabhauma and Rāmānanda's conversion impressed the King. The story of the healing of a leper by Viśvambhara was reported to Pratāparudra. This miracle which could only be performed by an embrace of a soul who possessed supernatural power, moved the King, who became anxious to see Viśvambhara's feet.

The arguments of Kavikarnapūra's Viśvambhara are also reasonable in view of the King's interview, but the former has evidently exaggerated the keenness

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1. Locanadāsa, pp. 133-134.

of the King, who, it is said, wanted to become an ascetic if he was not allowed an interview with Viśvambhara.

Kavikarnapūra's description also states that Sārvabhauma was well aware of the movements of Viśvambhara in the Ratha festival. Sārvabhauma's advice to the King implies that Viśvambhara had attended several Ratha festivals at Nīlācala, whereas this was the first occasion when Pratāparudra met Viśvambhara in a grove. Vṛndāvanadāsa's description states that Pratāparudra was away from Orissa at this time. On the first occasion when Viśvambhara first visited Nīlācala Kavikarnapūra has already shown in his Nāṭaka that Viśvambhara embraced Pratāparudra without knowing his identity, but Karnapūra states in his Mahākāvya that Viśvambhara while resting in a grove embraced the King and addressed him as 'Rudradeva'. The version in the Mahākāvya implies that Viśvambhara embraced the King and spoke sweetly to him once more, when on a visit to the temple in Cuttack. Kavikarnapūra mentions in his Mahākāvya a description of Viśvambhara's reception arranged by the King on his trip to Gauṇḍa.

Viśvambhara stayed at Nīlācala for eighteen days<sup>1</sup> and then left for the holy places, returning only

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1. Mahākāvya, XII.94.

after the Ratha festival. It is possible that Kavikarnapūra implied that even the associates of Viśvambhara had acquired supernatural power by which they could forecast the master's movement, and hence Śārvabhauma was able to tell the King what to do. However, unlike Murāri Gupta and Ṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, Kavikarnapūra does not portray Viśvambhara as displaying any sort of supernatural power to Pratāparudra. Kavikarnapūra's account implies that the King was converted without Viśvambhara's knowledge.

Murāri Gupta states that Nityānanda and Viśvambhara together converted the King. He further says that Viśvambhara showed his six-armed theophany to Pratāparudra Deva. Vrindāvanadāsa was closely associated with Nityānanda and would have had no reason to conceal the fact if Nityānanda had taken this part in the conversion of the King. We are therefore doubtful of Murāri's evidence on this point.

Vrindāvanadāsa's account shows that the King was at first doubtful about the supernatural power of Viśvambhara. However, he later realised his mistake and was ultimately blessed and garlanded by Viśvambhara.

According to Ṛṣṇadāsa, Viśvambhara, persuaded by the bhaktas to meet the King, said that he would be

criticised even by his followers Svarūpa Dāmodara if he allowed such an interview. Viśvambhara, however, agreed to meet the King if Svarūpa Dāmodara approved of it. Svarūpa Dāmodara's account, on which Kṛṣṇadāsa relied, appears to be lost. Though there are a few doctrinal verses attributed to him in the Gaurā-ganoddeśa-dīpikā of Kavikarṇapūra.<sup>1</sup> These cannot be implied by the word Kaṇḍā by which Kṛṣṇadāsa refers to his source. It is surprising that Kavikarṇapūra does not mention Svarūpa Dāmodara's Kaṇḍā, although he expresses his indebtedness to Murāri's Kaṇḍā in his Mahā-kāvya. This must indicate that he either did not know Svarūpa Dāmodara's account, or did not believe in its veracity. The complete absence of any reference to it suggest that the former alternative is more likely to be true. Most of the biographers of Viśvambhara accept that Svarūpa Dāmodara was a great figure in the period of Viśvambhara's stay at Nilācala. Kavikarṇapūra has credited him with formulating the doctrine of Pañca-tattva,<sup>2</sup> according to which Caitanya, Nityānanda, Advaita, Gadādhara and Śrīvāsa are the five Tattavas

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1. G.G.D. (13.17.149).

2. G.G.D., p. 17.

of the faith, and also describes Caitanya as Mahāprabhu. Whereas Advaita and Nityānanda have been described as Prabhus. It is interesting to note that Locana replaces his Guru Nārāyaṇa Saṅkar for Śrīvāsa. (Locanadāsa, p. 2). Svarūpa Dāmodara is said to have mastered Vaiṣṇava theology.<sup>1</sup> He<sup>2</sup> was in charge of Raghurāthadāsa's Vaiṣṇava training at Mīlācala, as the latter expressly acknowledged his indebtedness to Svarūpa Dāmodara in the opening verses of his Mukta-carita.

It appears from Kṛṣṇadāsa's description that Svarūpa Dāmodara was closely associated with the King's conversion. If in fact Svarūpa Dāmodara wrote a Maṇacā he would have emphasised his own influence in it, since he was fully conscious of his important position among Viśvambhara's disciples.

Moreover Kṛṣṇadāsa's description states that Svarūpa decided whether or not Viśvambhara should read certain books, in the light of his own judgement on their moral value.<sup>3</sup> Other biographers mention Svarūpa's devotion to Viśvambhara, but they do not write thus of

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1. C-C Madhya, X, 108-109.

2. C-C, Antya, VI, 199-202.

3. C-C Madhya, X, 110-112.

Svarūpa's influence over Viśvambhara. If he had believed in its truth, Navikarnapūra would almost certainly have included Svarūpa's participation in Iratāparudra's conversion in his Itāka. It appears that Svarūpa was Raghunāthadāsa's -Śikṣā Guru, and Raghunātha was revered by Kṛṣṇadāsa as a guru.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that Raghunāthadāsa informed Kṛṣṇadāsa of Svarūpa's influence over Viśvambhara and Kṛṣṇadāsa thus overstressed it in his account. Alternatively, there may have been some such reference in Svarūpa's Itāka, on which Kṛṣṇadāsa based his book. It is also possible that both Svarūpa's Itāka and Raghunāthadāsa's oral testimony influenced Kṛṣṇadāsa to an equal extent.

We know that Viśvambhara created a renaissance of Vaiṣṇavism. Apart from the Vaiṣṇava scholars some non-Vaiṣṇava scholars of his time virtually surrendered to Viśvambhara's ideas, which appear to have been forceful and magnetic. He was undoubtedly the greatest spiritual force of the age. We cannot, therefore, believe that Viśvambhara would allow himself to be persuaded to meet the King against his better judgment merely on the advice of Svarūpa Dāmodara. It seems that the disciples, after

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1. C-C Ādi, i.18-19.

the death of his master was inclined to over-stress his own influence upon him.

Again Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja writes that Nityānanda and other bhaktas persuaded Viśvambhara to send his own apparel to the King. We cannot rely on this story since Viśvambhara at first sternly refused to see the King. If this was true we have to assume that Viśvambhara's actions were self-contradictory. Moreover Vyṇḍāvanadāsa does not mention Nityānanda's participation in the description of the King's conversion, although the former was closely associated with Nityānanda.

In continuation of this episode Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja adds that Rāya Rāmānanda's convincing arguments moved Viśvambhara, who at last agreed to meet the prince instead of the King. Accordingly the prince came, and Viśvambhara embraced him. Viśvambhara thought of Lord Kṛṣṇa while embracing him because the prince was of a dark complexion. This little incident is possible, for Viśvambhara was evidently very emotional, but we find it hard to believe this story because it occurs only in one comparatively late source and if true it would be evidence of great inconsistency on the part of Viśvambhara, since the crown prince was himself a royal personage, hardly less dangerous to the spiritual welfare



of the Sannyāsī than his father. If there is any truth in the story Havikarnapura would hardly have omitted this reference to the prince in his Mahākāvya or in his Nāṭaka.

Again, Kṛṣṇadāsa writes that on this day of the Ratha festival Viśvambhara was moved at seeing the King sweeping the path of the Ratha with his own hands and he wanted to favour him. It was according to custom<sup>1</sup> that Pratāparudra swept the path, and there was nothing new in his action which might move Viśvambhara. It is unlikely that, having attended this festival on an earlier occasion and having lived in the district for some months, he would be unaware of this practice.

Viśvambhara began to dance and as the procession moved on he came before the King. Viśvambhara was about to fall to the ground from emotion, but Pratāparudra supported him. Viśvambhara came to his senses at the touch of a worldly man, and cried shame on himself for having been touched by such a man. According to Kṛṣṇadāsa, Viśvambhara created the scene in order to warn his disciples against consorting with worldly minded men. This is really surprising and is hardly consistent with all our other knowledge of the teacher's personality. Kṛṣṇadāsa adds that Sārvabhauma advised the King to see Viśvambhara

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1. J.B.O.R.S., Vol. V, Pt. 1, p. 147.

when the latter would be tired of dancing and would rest in a garden, Oblivious of the outer world. This instruction seems to have been copied literally by Kṛṣṇadāsa from Kavikarṇapūra's Nāṭaka. Kṛṣṇadāsa has accepted this without verifying its authenticity.

Kṛṣṇadāsa's account of the interview between the saint and the King is in agreement with that of Kavikarṇapūra, except that Kṛṣṇadāsa adds that Viśvambhara revealed his theophany to the King, warning him not to disclose it to anybody. Thus, according to Kṛṣṇadāsa the King was converted.

Another point of difference is that Kavikarṇapūra's Viśvambhara does not know the identity of the visitor, whereas Kṛṣṇadāsa's Viśvambhara knows in his heart that he is King Pratāparudra Deva. Kavikarṇapūra's King was converted by the holy touch of Viśvambhara without the latter's knowledge, but Kṛṣṇadāsa's King was converted with Viśvambhara's knowledge. Moreover, Kṛṣṇadāsa added, apparently from his own imagination, that Viśvambhara was so pleased with the sincerity of the King that he revealed his supernatural power to the King, whereas Kavikarṇapūra is silent about this supernatural power although the latter composed Chaitanya-  
candrodāya Nāṭaka at the instruction of King Pratāparud-

radeva.

Kavikarṇapūra writes that after the death of Viśvambhara on the occasion of the Ratha festival King Pratāparudra came to Nīlācala to sweep the path of the Ratha. The King was mourning the death of the great teacher. He asked Kavikarṇapūra to write of the Līlās of Viśvambhara to enable the mourners to forget their separation from Viśvambhara. Accordingly Kavikarṇapūra wrote his Nāṭaka.<sup>1</sup>

Kavikarṇapūra writes in the conclusion of his Nāṭaka that he has based it on his own observation on the oral testimony of the close disciples, and the books already written about Viśvambhara. If there was any difference of opinion in a particular incident, he thoroughly investigated it and wrote only what he judged to be authentic.<sup>2</sup>

It is highly probable that Kavikarṇapūra based his materials also on the oral testimony of his father Sivānandasena, who was closely associated with Viśvambhara's Nīlācala-Pīlā.<sup>3</sup> Sivānanda Sēna, in his autobiographical

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1. Nāṭaka, Act I, pp. 1-3.

2. Ibid., Act X.

3. Kaṇḍa, iv. 17. C.; also Nāṭaka Act, VIII, IX, X, Mahākāvya, XIII, 127, XIV, 100-102, XX, 17.

poem writes that Viśvambhara asked him to come to Nīlācala at the end of a year with the pilgrims from Gauṇḍa. He was overwhelmed with sorrow as Viśvambhara left Navadvīpa to live at Nīlācala.<sup>1</sup> Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja writes that every year before the Ratha festival Sivānanda used to go to Nīlācala, guiding many Bengal bhaktas, and bearing the cost of their journey.<sup>2</sup>

Viśvambhara was so close to Sivānanda that the former paid an over-night visit on his way to Gauṇḍa to the latter's house at Kañcanpallī.<sup>3</sup> Thus he was closely associated with Viśvambhara, and we can rely in many respects on his oral testimony to his son. It is possible that Kavikarnāpūra knew of the details of the King's encounter with Viśvambhara from the testimony of Pratāparudra himself. It is unlikely that Kavikarnāpūra would have stated that the King was received by Viśvambhara and converted without the latter's knowledge, if in fact the case had been otherwise.

It appears from the description of the biographer's of Viśvambhara that the King was ready to become

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1. G.F.T., p. 249.

2. C-C Madhya, XVI, 18-19.

3. Mahākāvya, ~~XXI~~ 18.

an ascetic and even intended to commit suicide unless he saw Viśvambhara. It may be assumed that Viśvambhara made a strong impression upon the King by his magnetic personality just as he had impressed Sārvabhauma and Rāyaṛāmānānda, two of the most important scholars of the time. The King was religiously minded and a lover of theological discourse, and it was, therefore, natural that he was eager to have an interview with Viśvambhara.

On the other hand, we can assume that Viśvambhara was also impressed by the sincerity of the King as the former was repeatedly told by the bhaktas about the latter's benevolent deeds. Nevertheless, he refused to meet the King to show that Royalty was worthless when compared with spiritual life. He may have had also intended to kindle and to test the King's faith and enthusiasm.

It also appears that Viśvambhara did not like to meet the King on the grounds that if he violated the principles of an ascetic by meeting worldly men then other ascetics would also follow his example and subsequently they would break their principles and would acquire bad habits.

We cannot but be surprised, however, at Viśvambhara's action. Though the ascetic is forbidden to

associate too closely with women and worldly man, there can have been no real objection in most ascetic circles to his receiving the King in audience, and we know of no other case in which an ascetic teacher refused an audience with a King on the mere ground of his royalty. Moreover, we may confidently believe that Viśvambhara had among his followers many very wealthy laymen. It is thus difficult to account for his disinclination to meet the pious King, but we must believe that the King was introduced to him in the guise of an ordinary man, otherwise Kavikarṇapūra would hardly have given us this story. We cannot but suspect that Viśvambhara had special motives in taking this course, which were based on some earlier action of the King of which the teacher strongly disapproved, and which Kavikarṇapūra, for obvious reasons, did not wish to record in a text written at the behest of the King himself.<sup>1</sup>

The descriptions of Vṛndāvandāsa and Kṛṣṇadāsa imply that the King had some doubts in the supernatural power of Viśvambhara. It is, however, not unlikely that a sight of an ascetic besmeared with dust and sweat, ~~would~~ produce ~~doubt~~ ~~a suspect~~ as to his supernatural power in a curious King

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1. Nāṭaka, Act I, pp. 1-3.

like Pratāparudra.

Although Pratāparudra was doubtful about the divinity of Viśvambhara, it seems that his doubt was removed when he saw the young Viśvambhara, who was glorifying the name of Kṛṣṇa along with his disciples in the streets of Nīlācala. This sweet music, dancing and the name of Hari were completely new to the King. The conversion of his priest Kāśī Misra Sārvabhauma and Rāmānanda impressed him. His minister Rāyarāmānanda spoke highly of Viśvambhara to the King, who was inclined to have an audience with the young ascetic. The King<sup>1</sup> was fond of theological discourse, and hence it is likely that he intended an interview with the saint.

It has been stated in Kavikarṇapūra's Nāṭaka that the King said to Kāśī Misra that to the virtuous Viśvambhara had become an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa;

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1. Dinesh Chandra Sen, in his Chaitanya and his companions, pp. 7-8, quotes from A. Stirling regarding the scholarship and valour of Pratāparudra thus: "His wisdom and learning soon became the theme and admiration of the whole country. He had studied deeply all the Cāstras and was very fond of disputing and conversing on points of theology and he introduced many curious constructions of his own and doctrines which were altogether new. He was withal devout and built many temples. His skill in the art of war and civil government was eminent; in short he was equally celebrated as an able, learned and warlike and religious prince". History of Orissa by A. Stirling, Esq., printed at the De's Vtkal press, Balasore, 1891., p. 131.

Viśvambhara was displaying his Vṛndāvanalīlā at Nīlācala in order to feel the motions, sorrow and helplessness of the Gopīs.<sup>1</sup>

D.C. Sen<sup>2</sup> writes how the King changed when he was embraced by Viśvambhara. Whatever may be the truth in this conversion of the King, as claimed by the biographers, it is most likely that Pratāparudra had great reverence for Viśvambhara and did his best to facilitate Viśvambhara's stay at Nīlācala until the latter's death and thus we have some reason to believe in the authenticity of descriptions of Navikarnapūra and Kṛṣṇadāsa Navirāja in respect of the King's order to his minister to build a memorial pillar, a ghāṭa and a residence for ascetics to commemorate Viśvambhara's journey to Gauṇḍa. The story of the meeting in the grove occurs in all the biographies, and seems to have a basis of truth. It seems probable on the strength of Navikar-

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1. Māṭaka, Act II, p. 192.

2. Dr. D.C. Sen; Caitanya and his companions; p. 12. He quotes from 'Jagannāth Vallabha' thus: "This is indeed a marvel, Raja Pratāparudra, who is a terror to the Pathans, whose physical might surpasses that of most men, whose iron contact is dreaded by the strongest of wrestlers, has melted like a soft thing at the touch of Chaitanya".



ṇapūra's Nāṭaka, which was performed before Pratāparudra himself and therefore is not likely to be false in this particular, that the King came to Viśvambhara in the guise of an ordinary man, and that Viśvambhara did not know the true identity of his visitor. There can be no doubt that Viśvambhara became an influential force in the religious life of Orissa, and was much respected by Pratāparudra, though we have grave doubts about the King's complete conversion.

R.D. Banerjee<sup>1</sup> is inclined to attribute the decline of Orissa to the religious influence of Viśvambhara over Pratāparudra Deva and his people.

The inscriptions of Pratāparudra deva do not speak about Viśvambhara at all, neither do the contemporary biographers describe Viśvambhara as the royal Guru. R.D. Banerjee relied mostly on the Caitanya Caritamṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa and Caitanyamāṅgāla of Jayānanda in his description of Viśvambhara's influence over Pratāparudra.

As we have seen, these works have evidently exaggerated that influence. There is no strong evidence to indicate Viśvambhara's influence in the military and political affairs of the state.

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1. R.D. Banerjee, History of Orissa, pp. 330-331, Vol. 1, Calcutta, 1930.

Thus we have reason to believe that Viśvambhara's influence was not responsible for the humiliating defeats of Pratāparudra, since we must not accept the testimony of hagiography at its face value. It is sufficient to point to Pratāparudra's inferiority, both as regards resources and military genius, to account for his defeats at the hands of Eṣṇa deva Rāya.

It cannot, however, be denied that Viśvambhara had a vigorous influence on the social and religious life of Crissa. But we have no evidence to show that this had any effect on the fighting potentialities of the Crissan army, or encouraged serious dissension among the people.

## CHAPTER X

### CONCLUSION

Viśvambhara lived in a time of political, religious and cultural transition.

In the political sphere, the shift of power from Hindu to Muslim hands in North India was almost complete. Presumably only Orissa and Assam remained as independent Hindu Kingdoms, but here and there in Bengal there were probably small areas where feudatory Hindu Kings and chieftains still ruled who had retained their power on sufferance.

In the religious sphere, the harassment of Hindus was on the decline, though Hindu Pilgrims were subject to being plundered. The <sup>attacks</sup> ~~plunders~~ were probably motivated mainly by the desire for plunder. Religion was a secondary issue. Marauding Hindu armies from Orissa in this period frequently sacked Hindu temples in rival Hindu Kingdoms and returned with valuable relics and images. And naturally marauding Muslim armies coming into Orissa from Bengal did the same. The purpose behind sacking temples was the desecration of religious objects. Within Bengal Hindus presumably moved about with greater

security, largely due to strong government, rather than to religious tolerance, for obviously no Muslim ruler who wished to retain power could make a practice of persecuting the majority of his subjects.

Within Hinduism itself, there emerges a picture of uncertainty. Muslim political dominance was to some extent responsible for this. To survive, the Hindu Social order, the Caste system, required that the supreme political head should be a Hindu. The Brāhmaṇa class was dependent to some extent upon the

patronage of the Kṣatriyas. The coming of Muslim rule had removed that patronage.

Obviously not all the sources of patronage had dried up. Otherwise the Navya Nyāya schools of Sanskrit Philosophy in Navadvīpa would have disappeared. But the scope of patronage of Sanskrit scholarship was shrinking. Scholars were migrating into Navadvīpa from such areas as Sylhet and Chittagong.

Now as these sources of patronage shrank and dried up, other sources were opening up, but not for Sanskrit scholarship, for vernacular competition. As the influence of Orthodox Hinduism and Sanskrit scholarship declined, the influence of indigenous cults grew. Brāhmaṇa priests who were prepared to lend their prestige to these cults by serving them could be sure of sufficient income. But some were too proud to do so. They recoiled in horror from the hideous mother-cults of Kālī and Caṇḍī. But poverty had lessened the fastidiousness of some Brāhmaṇas and they even employed their literary talents in the composition of Maṅgala-Kāvyas on these deities.

A further source of patronage was provided by the Muslim rulers themselves. The first wave of Muslim rulers in Northern India, the Pathans, were presumably

unlettered and uncultured. After three hundred years of rule in Bengal they had acquired fluency in Bengali and an interest in Bengali culture, which was of course predominantly Hindu - religious. They were attracted by the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana and began commissioning translation into the vernacular. Hitherto Vernacular Versions of these works had been anathema to the cultured Hindu upper classes and dire penalties were predicted for those who heard them recited. But here again, presumably poverty lessened their fastidiousness and Brāhmaṇa poets began to accept commissions from Muslim patrons. These translations and the composition of the Maṅgala-kāvyas mark the beginnings of Bengali literature, which commenced roughly at the time of the birth of Caitanya.

Thus Bengali Hindu Society in this age of uncertainty and transition was split up into various contending groups and it was into this society that Viśvambhara was born.

The broad outline of Viśvambhara's life has been revealed in the preceeding pages, where the various biographers' versions were compared and sifted. In this concluding chapter we must attempt to see his life in the perspective of his times.

Viśvambhara was born into a traditional brahmanic scholarly class, and his education was largely of the traditional Sanskrit type: grammar, poetics and rhetoric. All the indications are that he readily absorbed the values of this scholarly class: he was proud of his learning and delighted in the grammatical niceties he had been taught.

But the seeds of conflict were inherent in his home background. His father was a Vaiṣṇava: his teachers were orthodox. Possibly in Sylhet where his father, Jagannātha Misra, had been born and bred there was no inconsistency between traditional Sanskrit scholarship and Vaiṣṇavism, but in Navadvīpa there obviously was. His teachers were scornful of Vaiṣṇavism and lost no opportunity of showing their contempt.

The centre of Vaiṣṇavism, where Viśvambhara grew up, was the home of Śrīvāsa, who was presumably a rich man. He was apparently on good terms with Viśvambhara's father and encouraged Viśvambhara to join them in their religious meetings and discussions. Viśvambhara's attitude was apathetic: he wanted to be a teacher like his teachers.

Nevertheless, Viśvambhara was dependent on his father and his father's death came as a cruel blow.

Viśvambhara and his mother might have been exposed to poverty for some years, possibly about five, from the time when Viśvambhara was thirteen to when he was eighteen, and he presumably established his tol. During these years of poverty, which were also his formative years, Viśvambhara was brought into intimate contact with the lower order who used to supply the daily necessities free of charge. This contact must obviously have had some effect. He may occasionally have wondered about the moral basis of the cast system.

At seventeen he was married. The added burden must have strained the financial resources of the family and at first Śacī Devī had been reluctant to consent to the match. But by all accounts it was a love match and Śacī gave way to please her son. Shortly after the marriage Viśvambhara went off to East Bengal. The most likely reason would seem to us to be financial: to contact relatives still living there and cast around for a means of livelihood.

He returns. Lakṣmī Priyā is dead by snake-bite. He marries again, but requires financial assistance to do so. He establishes his tol. It flourishes and presumably he clears the family debts. By 23 he has sufficient money at least to visit Gayā and perform his



father's Śrāddha ceremony.

At the time he leaves, the future course of his life is presumably settled. He has married for a second time, so presumably he enjoys conjugal life. He is established as a well known teacher of Sanskrit grammar and will presumably carry on for the rest of his life as a householder and teacher.

Then he visits Gayā. And the whole course of his life is transformed. One wonders what precisely happened to him there. Murāri Gupta, his contemporary and the most reliable of his biographers, was not there to record the events that occurred in Gayā at the most important moment of his life. All the accounts we have are second-hand. All we know is that whatever happened to him it was of a decisive nature, for his personality had undergone a profound change on his return.

Even though we can only guess at the events in Gayā, our guesses may perhaps be correct. We presume that in Gayā he came into contact with intellectual exponents of Vaiṣṇavism who were far advanced in scholarship and prestige, compared with his earlier teachers in Navadvīpa. The intellectual balance between his educational background and his home-religious background was thus restored to equilibrium. He had gone to mourn

his father and now possibly for the first time he heard dazzling expositions of his father's faith. We presume further that it was in Gayā that Viśvambhara witnessed Saṅkīrtana for the first time. And he was deeply moved by the ecstatic singing and dancing. And we presume further that in this new atmosphere of intellectual and emotional stimulation aspects of his personality that in the cold, calculating atmosphere of Navadvīpa had long remained dormant were awakened to vibrant life.

We presume all these things on the grounds of his subsequent behaviour, which on his return to Navadvīpa assumes the typical pattern of the convert. He continues to teach because he has to earn a living, but he spends most of his time in the company of those people of Navadvīpa, with whom he can recreate the atmosphere of Gayā: he becomes a frequent visitor of Śrīvāsa and mingles enthusiastically with the Vaiṣṇava community. His enthusiasm re-awakens the sense of hope in Śrīvāsa and his companions, who begin to see through Viśvambhara a new dawning of their faith.

Meanwhile Viśvambhara <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ so on fire with his new faith that teaching becomes irksome. The leaves of his book lie before him like the dead leaves of autumn, while the spring of his new faith runs riot in his blood.

The old values of scholarship in which he has been brought up to believe seem useless in this new age of transition. Hinduism can be born again perhaps, but not from these barren leaves. He begins to talk of his vision of Kṛṣṇa, instead of Grammar. His students wonder what has come over their teacher, who was once so keen on the niceties of Grammar. They question him eagerly and finally he closes his books for the last time and bursts forth in the song and dance of the new Vaiṣṇavism. To his pupils it is a revelation: Sankīrtana is new to them. But it begins to spread in Navadvīpa like an infection.

Srīvāsa and his associates are elated. Hitherto their position has been weak. Their little community centering round Srīvāsa's house has been like a beleaguered garrison, surrounded by the hostile and scornful intelligentsia. The Vaiṣṇavas had been so much on the defensive and so pathetic that they were unable to retain the allegiance of members of the younger generation like Viśvambhara, who had actually been born and raised in Vaiṣṇava households. Viśvambhara's return from Gayā came to this little beleaguered garrison like a promise of reinforcements. Viśvambhara was a good catch: a defector from the enemies' camp, and he was full of

boundless enthusiasm.

But Viśvambhara's effect on the people of Navadvīpa cannot be attributed to himself alone. Obviously he was the harbinger of something that was happening in Gayā and his success must be attributed at least in parts to what he brought back from there: a new spirit of Hindu revival and intoxicating, new form of worship, Saṅkīrtana. These imports from Gayā, combined with Viśvambhara's remarkable personality and presence were responsible for his success.

Viśvambhara had everything in his favour. He had the prestige of brahmanic blood and brahmanic training. He had a fair skin. And had remarkably good looks. His past history had put him in touch with all classes of society. He had infinite charm of manner and could gain friendship with men of all walks of life. He had the nervous, excitable temperament of an artist and immense energy. And added to all these gifts, he had the gift of music and the mastery of rhythm. Small wonder that he swept the masses into a frenzy of ecstatic adulation. And small wonder too that having been swept there by him, the masses should begin to see in him the marks of godhead.

Viśvambhara's personality had one further

pecularity. The proud scholars called him an epileptic: His admirers the ultimate in bhakti-prena. Obviously at this late date the truth of this particular peculiarity can never really be known. But of this at least we can be certain: something set him apart from the vast mass of humanity; something that made him subject to trance, in which he shuddered and convulsed, lost control and co-ordination of his movements so that he rolled on the ground and finally completely lost consciousness. What must surely interest us is not how such manifestations would affect twentieth-century man with his predominantly scientific outlook, but how they affected the sixteenth-century Indian with his predominantly religious views. The intellectuals, as we have said, put these manifestations down to disease, but his admirers put them down to the workings of godhead. The second view gradually gained the upper-hand, even among the former detractors.

Men who had previously scorned Vaiṣṇavism in Navadvīpa and ridiculed Śrīvāsa and his crowd, became beset with doubts that profoundly disturbed them, so much so that they fell ill. Again we must try to view these phenomena with sixteenth-century eyes. Men had a more profound sense of sin in those days, and their conscience punished them grievously. People sincerely

believed that leprosy resulted from sin. A detractor of Śrīvāsa began to display symptoms of a disease resembling leprosy. He grew <sup>r</sup>seriously alarmed, and rushed to Viśvambhara declaring that he acknowledged Viśvambhara as God incarnate. Impulsive Viśvambhara sent him packing, thus increasing the man's distress and conviction that he was damned. He comes to Viśvambhara again beseeching him to save him. Viśvambhara sends him to Śrīvāsa to ask for his forgiveness, with the promise that once this forgiveness has been granted, his disease will be cured. "Miraculously" this proves correct.

To twentieth century man such occurrences are not miraculous. The particular disease in question is alleged to have developed in three days. The incubation period of leprosy is considerably longer. It is now known that emotional stress may produce such symptoms as eczema and asthma, and even arthritis. This man Gopāla Cāpāla was obviously suffering from one of these stress diseases. Once his distress was relieved, the symptoms disappeared. Had there been any serious organic disturbance resulting from emotional stress, the relief of his emotional stress would not have cured him, of course. But he would probably have become better integrated emotionally so as to cope with his disability. So to us such things as cures at

Lourdes etc. do not appear miraculous.

But Viśvambhara did not live in the twentieth century. His effect on twentieth-century man is, therefore, irrelevant. Our concern and purpose is to try to reconstruct his life in the perspective of his times, and if we sincerely attempt to do so, then we are surely entitled to speculate on the repercussions or reactions of audience-response upon Viśvambhara himself.

We would suggest, therefore, that between Viśvambhara and his audience a two-way process of influence was established. The insidious repetitions, rhythms of his chant and the insistent beat of the music gradually mesmerised first himself and then his audience into a trance-like state, in which hallucinations and visions are not at all unlikely. Gradually imperceptibly the rhythms quicken or perhaps only seem to quicken, as the excitement rises and the dance grows more wild or perhaps only seems to grow more wild. Then suddenly something happens to Viśvambhara: <sup>the</sup> trance begins. He dances and shakes in wild abandon. The audience chants louder. The beat grows ever more insistent. Viśvambhara is sweating, and trembling. He no longer understands what is happening to himself. He is "possessed". The audience are infused with his intense excitement and their gasps and wild cries drive him on to even wilder and wilder

exertions. People begin to swoon. Lights dance before the eyes. The noise is deafening. In an ecstatic mood Viśvambhara suddenly drops from sight and all collapse in exhaustion.

Afterwards people speak of having felt the presence of the godhead. There are reports of people being cured from leprosy on Viśvambhara's command. He must have miraculous power, people argue. He must even be God Himself, other argue, come to save us in this Kaliyuga. And inevitably the stories come back to Viśvambhara. Don't be silly, he says, but he is doubtful. The doubts invade his subconscious mind to dwell there and work their will and then one day he passes into trance and declares "I am He". When reminded of it later, he protests that it is preposterous, but in his heart is deeply disturbed and wonders: "Am I He? Could I be? Is it possible?"

His wife sees the change that has come over him. She has heard the rumours. She has heard the stories of the Bhāgavata and the infant Kṛṣṇa, who was God incarnate. She has heard the stories of Behulā and her miraculous bringing back of her husband from the dead. The indigenous cults of the lower castes are spreading the cult of Bhakti towards indigenous deities. She has



heard tales of Behulā commissioned by Manasā to spread her worship. She has heard of Kālaketu and his wife Phullarā commissioned to spread the worship of Caṇḍī. She knows the incredible powers Bhakti can work in those chosen by the agent of the Gods. Why should not her husband be one such. The man commissioned by Kṛṣṇa to propagate Bhakti in this decadent age. Why not? She broods about it and one day tells Viśvambhara of her faith.

Even my wife believes that 'I am He', Viśvambhara broods. How long can I go on doubting? Recitals of Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma, songs of the Saiva ~~sages~~, even the smell of palm wine begin to affect him strangely. He feels himself possessed by the spirit of the Great Boar (Varāha), of Nṛsiṃha, of Siva and of Balarāma. Whilst possessed of these spirits, he himself feels urges of fantastic strength within his limbs. He is able to push great, strong men right across the room with his little finger, <sup>do the</sup> to <sup>wildest</sup> Tāṇḍava dance, the very kind of ~~wild~~ dance, and to fling jugs high in the air with his teeth. His personality is beginning to split. He is no longer able even to remember what he does or says in his trances. He asks Murāri anxiously: Did I do anything wrong?; did I offend anyone?; how did I behave? Who was I? And within himself

he wonders: who on earth am I? What is happening to me? Who am I becoming? Can I be Kṛṣṇa? People say I am. But can I be? At the moment I feel like an ordinary man. I love my mother and my wife. But he sits and broods and broods. He begins to long to find Kṛṣṇa. If I could find Kṛṣṇa, I should know once and for all who I really am.

Meanwhile his devotees grew in number. His Kīrtāṇa parties grow so large and clamorous that the Kāzī is forced to intervene. The Kāzī does not punish him. He enjoys the recital, but the writing is on the wall: Viśvambhara can not stay in Navadvīpa. ~~He must go and find Kṛṣṇa. He must renounce the world and dedicate himself to the search. He must leave Navadvīpa.~~ His relations with his wife and mother are impossible. How can he stay with his mother? He must go and find Kṛṣṇa. He must renounce the world and dedicate himself to the search. He must leave Navadvīpa.

Once more we arrive at an interesting phase in Viśvambhara's life: his departure from Navadvīpa to travel through parts of India and eventually to settle in Nīlācala. And once more reliable information ceases. Murāri does not accompany him. There are no eye-witness accounts. Only second-hand sources. There are many

interesting questions that we long to ask and that require answers.

Why, if Viśvambhara wished to find Kṛṣṇa, did he not go straight to Vṛndāvana and settle there? We are told that he did not go because his mother did not wish him to live so far away. One wonders how heavy a mother's request would weigh with a man who had renounced the world like Viśvambhara and who was deeply concerned to find Kṛṣṇa and thereby establish his own spiritual identity. It is possible that Vṛndāvana was not so safe for a man like Viśvambhara, that his ecstatic Śaṅkīrtana would rouse such a pitch of enthusiasm within the Hindu community that clashes with the Muslim authorities would be inevitable. But then one wonders how heavy such considerations would weigh with a man like Viśvambhara. The Muslim authorities may well have discouraged Caitanya's travels as far as Vṛndāvana which after all is near Delhi.

The other question that prompts itself is: why did he settle in Nīlācala. We are told that it is because of his mother, but was it? What had Nīlācala got to offer that Vṛndāvana had not? Nīlācala was in an independent Hindu kingdom: Vṛndāvana was not. Nīlācala had a thriving Vaiṣṇava community centering round Nīlācala's

Jagannātha Temple: Vṛndāvana was the site of Kṛṣṇa's Līlā with the gopīs and Mādhavendra Purī was making strenuous efforts to re-establish Kṛṣṇa worship there. But to do so, he had found it necessary to travel to Nīlācala for sandal-wood etc... Orissa's King, Pratāparudadeva, was a Vaiṣṇava: Sikandar Lodi<sup>(sic)</sup> was the ruler of Vṛndāvana and Mādhavendra had not dared to go back there with the sandalwood and camphor.

What we suggest happened is this. Viśvambhara was accepted as God incarnate by his followers. This ensured that his wife and mother would be secure and cared for and freed him from financial responsibility and care. But Caitanya wished to establish a monast<sup>e</sup>ry and endowments. He, and some of his followers, wished to establish the monast<sup>e</sup>ry in Vṛndāvana, but the only place where financial support was forthcoming was from the King of Orissa, Pratāparudradeva, and the rich Hindu community centering round the temple. An important factor may have been the fact that King Pratāparudradeva apparently took great personal interest in Caitanya's preaching. Hence Viśvambhara went to Orissa.

Now we will discuss what one might call the myth-making process.

In our weighing and sifting of the various

accounts, we were constantly driven to this conclusion: the basically factual, eye-witness account is that of Murāri Gupta; the other accounts all tend in their various ways to elaborate and embellish the outline presented by Murāri. In some cases, we have accepted these embellishments, where they seemed to us plausible, and consistent with Murāri's account. It seems to us possible that an author such as Vṛndāvanadāsa, the son of the nephew of Śrīvāsa, even though later in time than Murāri, nevertheless, has been able to pick out and elaborate upon features of Viśvambhara's early life, which in view of the later developments of the sect, were extremely significant: such as, for example, his poverty, his consorting intimately with the lower classes, and his performing charitable services for them. It is possible that these features prompted by some mystical saivas of South India, Buddhists and Muslims, gave rise to the tendency in Neo-Vaiṣṇavism to ignore caste-distinction, where possible. And to see in the service of man the worship of God. With the knowledge of insight Vṛndāvanadāsa could have seen the significance of these features of Viśvambhara's behaviour and thus recorded and embellished them.

But there are other features in the later

accounts that strike us as improbable and these we have rejected. The question now arises: why were these features added? The explanation we would offer is this. Murāri Gupta was a contemporary. He merely wished to record what he had heard and seen. At the time of his writing, the imprint of Caitanya's personality upon his times was still fresh. There was no need to elaborate. Murāri had before his mind's eye, as he wrote, the figure of Caitanya himself and the moving film of his extraordinary doings. They still retained the same power to move him in retrospect as they had in reality. But this was not so with the later authors. They were as much at a loss as we are to conceive of how a man could move a whole generation as Caitanya did. The later authors, therefore, lacked the faith of the simple Murāri. Murāri was content to record quite simply that he had been in the presence of God. The later authors could not even conceive of the presence of God being as Murāri said it was. It must surely have been more splendid than this, they argued. And thus they proceeded to model Caitanya in that conception of God, and in order to achieve their purpose they were driven back upon their imagination, the commonplaces of contemporary literature and of contemporary belief and legend. And thus it is that

we see then adding Kṛṣṇa anecdotes and Buddhist anecdotes at appropriate places, anecdotes of pushing Jagannātha's car <sup>o</sup> borrowed from contemporary Oriya tradition, and elaborating similies into metaphors: where Murāri records that Viśvambhara behaved like a Boar; they record he became a Boar, with hooves and horn and all.

This is the myth-making process, and it is evidenced from the names of the works: Murāri called his work a Caritamṛtā: i.e. a biography; the later writer called theirs: Mahākāvya, or Maṅgala, or Bhāgavata, all titles which suggest epic grandeur, or hymns to deities, or life stories of Gods: i.e. the titles illustrate that they were aware of the fact that they had translated the events from the plane of reality to some other legendary plane.

With reference to his education we may confidently believe that he was far above the average in intelligence and he seems to have delighted in defeating his fellow students in debate. He studied the Vedas, Logic, Grammar, Rhetoric, Poetry, Drama and Dharmaśāstra.

Vṛndāvanadāsa, our main source for this period of the teacher's life, states that Viśvambhara used to frequent the houses of the humble folk of Navadvīpa. There is no reference to these incidents, which leaves

us with rather mixed feelings, in any other source. They were mainly interested in his spiritual development. Moreover, even though they might privately approve of his actions, it is unlikely that, in works largely intended for propaganda in a caste ridden community, they would emphasize such incidents, which must have seemed very shocking to the more orthodox. Nevertheless the account is so unexpected that one cannot but feel that it is based on truth. We have some evidence that at this stage of his career his ideas were rather wordly, <sup>l</sup>~~wordly~~. Thus we may believe that Viśvambhara had friends among the trades people of Navadvīpa.

The mother of Vṛndāvanadāsa was a child in Navadvīpa at the time when these incidents are said to have occurred, and she may have obtained the information from Sacī Devī, or even from some of the tradesmen themselves, and passed it on to the biographer.

Only Vṛndāvanadāsa states that Viśvambhara met Īśvara Purī at Navadvīpa. The accounts of Viśvambhara's meeting with Īśvara Purī in Gayā suggest that it was accidental and that Viśvambhara accepted dīkṣā from him on the spur of the moment. But it is intrinsically more probable that the two already knew one another, and therefore we may accept this story as likely to



be based on truth.

The following conclusion emerges from the conversation between Viśvambhara and Nukunda Datta: The story told by Vṛndāvanadāsa may contain some true reflection of the spiritual phase through which Viśvambhara was passing at the time. In his career as a teacher we are told that he mainly taught the more worldly arts of grammar, and was renowned as a debater. He may well have passed through a phase of worldliness and as a brilliant young scholar questioned the cries of the orthodox and was for a while much more interested in scoring points over older scholars than in mystic speculation. This indeed may be the reason why most of his biographers, intent on emphasizing their Lord's spirituality, tell us so little about his teaching career.

Following his decisive visit to Gayā Viśvambhara the householder became Viśvambhara the evangelist. Perhaps the best account of this period is that from Vṛndāvanadāsa's Caitanya Bhāgavata. Here we see a real human being at the beginning of his mystical experience displaying an intense and uncommon bhakti which overpowered other bhaktas, who were compelled by his magnetism to submit to his leadership. In the first phase of his spiritual career he felt some religious experiences which may well be subjectively true. Such experiences are reported of

the mystics of all religions.

Viśvambhara's services to the people of lower order are quite original and unexpected since such service on the part of a Brāhmaṇa to those of lower caste was considered contrary to Dharma. The doctrine that to serve man is to serve God is rather rare, in earlier Hindu writing, when expressed in such explicit form. Though it is of course implicit in such texts as the Bhāgavad Gītā. Nevertheless, we cannot believe that Vṛndāvana, anxious to gain converts to the new movement, should have included these unorthodox activities of his lord in his biography, if he had not fully believed them to be true, and they are not the sort of stories which would have been fabricated by devotees out of their own imagination. We therefore believe in Viśvambhara's acts of charity.

In the second phase of his spiritual career Viśvambhara was extremely emotional and all the biographers agree on this quality. He became lost in the contemplation of any spiritual reference (bhāva), which he heard, and he used to do exactly as these bhāvas said for Vṛndāva-  
nadāsa writes that Viśvambhara with his mind wholly concentrated on Kṛṣṇa, exhibited similar ecstasies.

We cannot avoid the suspicion that Murāri's

experience of Viśvambhara's Varāhāveśa was sparked off by some strange manifestation on the part of Viśvambhara. A sudden sense of identity with Viṣṇu in this Boar incarnation might well have produced in the mind of the emotional mystic an irrepressible impulse to play the part of the godhead, which would be interpreted by the devoted Murāri as a revelation.

Our judgement on the traditions of Nṛsiṃhāveśa and Śivāveśa is virtually the same as that on the Balarāmaveśa. It is quite likely that some such experience occurred.

With reference to his Valarāmāveśa we may believe that subconsciously he interpreted his own spiritual state in visual symbols, as is again common with mystics of every faith.

Vṛndāvana's description of this incident suggests that he was writing from the point of view of a devotee of the developed sect, which considered the companions of Viśvambhara as incarnations of the companions of Kṛṣṇa. There was a family connexion between Vṛndāvana and Śrīvāsa, and Vṛndāvana had been much inspired by Nityānanda, who was one of his main sources of information. Hence Vṛndāvana may have worked over the story to bring out the importance of these two disciples. It must not

be overlooked, however, that Viśvambhara may have had more than one Balarāmāveśa. The two accounts differ in so many particulars that they may be based on separate incidents.

Vṛndāvana's account of Viśvambhara's passing the wine shop is strange. We know that Viśvambhara was at all times emotional, and it is possible that some such incident occurred. It is likely that to Viśvambhara, who was so overwhelmed by religious thoughts, the smell of wine would suggest Balarāma. On the other hand this story is not mentioned by Murāri. We cannot wholly dismiss it, for it is not the sort of story that one would expect to be wholly invented; at the same time the evidence for its authenticity is not strong enough for our full <sup>acceptance</sup> evidence.

The following conclusion emerges from the Śrīkṛṣṇa-Caitanya and Gajāpati Pratāparudha Deva episode:-

Most biographers agree that:-

- i) Pratāparudha Deva became desirous of meeting Caitanya.
- ii) He asked someone, possibly Sārvabhauma or Rāmānanda, to arrange a meeting.
- iii) He was at first doubtful about Caitanya's identification with Lord Kṛṣṇa.
- iv) His doubt was removed either by the authority of

his kingdom's most distinguished scholar or by seeing, either in dream or in reality, some resemblance between Caitanya and Lord Jagannātha.

v) Because of Caitanya's alleged reluctance to consort with Kings, he first met Caitanya in a secluded grove in the disguise of an ordinary Vaiṣṇava.

vi) He was sufficiently impressed at this first meeting to seek further meetings, to do all he could to facilitate Caitanya's journey to Gauṇa and ordered the construction of a commemorative pillar and ghāṭa.

vii) Caitanya tried throughout to behave in accordance with his own conception of a religious mendicant, maintaining an uncompromising attitude of detachment from the world. He may have been completely unaware of even having met or embraced the King.

We see no reason why this basic outline of events should not be true. King Pratāparudra Deva is known to have been a pious Vaiṣṇava who sought out the company of the learned and the pious and greatly enjoyed religious discourse. All that is said about him above in the outline of his relationship with Caitanya is in harmony with that historical portrait of the King.

The individual deviations from the basic outline of events presented above mainly tend either towards the

glorification of some particular disciple of Caitanya (either Nityānanda, Purī Gośvāmī, or Svarūpa Dāmodara) or towards an exaggeration of the extent of Pratāparudra Deva's devotion to Caitanya. The latter tendency is easily accounted for. The relationship between King Pratāparudra and Caitanya was obviously of great importance to the Caitanya sect. It represented a signal success for them and was presumably a source of economic benefit. By retaining it, the sect presumably hope to receive similar benefit from other royal and aristocratic patrons. It is of interest to note that for similar reasons the climax of most contemporary Maṅgala-Kāvya was the conversion of a rich merchant to the cult.

## CHAPTER XI

### SOURCES

#### I. Murāri Gupta

Murāri Gupta is the earliest known biographer of Caitanya. He composed his Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya-Caritamṛta; in Sanskrit, which is popularly known as Kaṭacā,<sup>1</sup> The work is divided into four Prakramas, the first of which contains 438 ślokas and is subdivided into sixteen sargas, the second 480 ślokas and 18 sargas, the third 415 ślokas and 18 sargas and the fourth 596 ślokas and 26 sargas.

Murāri's ancestral home had been in Sylhet.<sup>2</sup> But his family migrated to Navadvīpa, where Murāri Gupta was born and brought up.<sup>3</sup> Thus in this respect Murāri Gupta's family background and circumstances were similar to those of Caitanya.

According to Vṛndāvana Dāsa, Murāri Gupta was

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1. A brief biographical account.
  2. C-bhāṭi, II, 35.
  3. Ibid., - Ādi, II, 99.

some years senior to Caitanya, though both were students in the same tol.<sup>1</sup> He is said to have competed with Caitanya in a disputation, in which neither achieved victory nor acknowledged defeat. Nevertheless, he was profoundly impressed with Caitanya's erudition and expressed a desire to take lessons from him.<sup>2</sup>

Vṛndāvanadāśa suggests that Murāri belonged to the Vaidya caste.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that he was a practising physician. He achieved a considerable reputation as a poet and some of his devotional lyrics are included in the Gaun-Pada-taraṅgiṇī. It is hinted that he was specifically selected by some Vaiṣṇavas of Navadvīpa to compose Caitanya's biography. Murāri Gupta himself states that he commenced his Caitanya-Caritamrita at the instance of the Vaiṣṇava community of Navadvīpa.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. B. Majumdar estimates that Murāri Gupta's Caitanya-Caritamrita was composed around 1535-1536.<sup>5</sup> We are prepared to accept this date on the basis of the

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1. Ibid., - Ādi, X, 11

2. Ibid., - Ādi, X, 28-35.

3. Ibid., - Ādi, II, 35.

4. Kaṇḍacā, ii.4. 24-26.

5. B. Majumdar - Caitanya Cariter upadana p. 76.



following arguments.

- i) The Caitanya-Caritamṛita summarises the life of Caitanya up to the time of his death<sup>1</sup> (1533). Thus it must have been composed after 1533.
- ii) Kavikarṇapūra acknowledges in his Mahākāvya, which was composed in 1542 A.D.,<sup>2</sup> his indebtedness for source material to Caitanya-Caritamṛita<sup>3</sup>. The Caitanya-Caritamṛita was therefore composed between 1533 and 1542.

Now if we assume that it took two to three years to compose each biography, this would mean that the Caitanya-Caritamṛita could have been finished by 1535/36 and Kavikarṇapūra's Mahākāvya started by 1539/40, leaving a period of between four and six years for Kavikarṇapūra to become acquainted with the earlier work and to have conceived the desire to write a version of his own, comprising material from the Caitanya-Caritamṛita and his own earlier Caitanya Candrodaya Nāṭaka, both of which were presumably composed at more or less the same time.

We have already indicated Murāri Gupta's

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1. Kaṭacā - i.2.12-14.

2. Mahākāvya ~~2749~~ 49

3. Ibid., ~~2742~~ 42

admiration for Caitanya's scholarship, but we are of the opinion that Murāri did not fall under the sway of Caitanya's personality, till after Caitanya's mystic experience in Gayā, Murāri was in Navadvīpa at the time of Caitanya's return and witnessed the effects wrought on the Vaiṣṇava Community by the remarkable change in Caitanya and his devotional ecstasies in the house of Sukāmbhara Brahmācārī.<sup>1</sup> After his conversion, Caitanya was enthusiastically welcomed into the Vaiṣṇava Community and used to attend their assemblies at the house of Śrīvāsa. Murāri, too, was present on these occasions.<sup>2</sup> He also participated in the Nagara-Saṁkīrtana parties organized and led by Caitanya.<sup>3</sup> Thus Murāri's record of the events in Navadvīpa from the time of Caitanya's return from Gayā till his sannyāsa in 1509/10<sup>4</sup> consists of a series of eye-witness reports, as he himself implies, and we have accepted this record as the most authentic and authoritative account of this period in Caitanya's life.

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1. Cait-bhā Madhya, I, 81.

2. Ibid., Madhya, XX, 6.

3. Cait-bhā Madhya, XXIII, 150.

4. C-C Ādi, VII, 32, Madhya, I, 11-12.

After 1509/10 Murāri Gupta's opportunities of observing and recording the life of Caitanya were limited. From 1509/10 to 1516 Caitanya was on his pilgrimage.<sup>1</sup> After 1516 he settled permanently in Purī, where he was visited each year for a period of three months by the Vaiṣṇavas from Navadvīpa at the time of the car festival (Ratha-yātrā). Murāri Gupta participated in these visits.<sup>2</sup> Thus though Murāri had opportunities of observing Caitanya after 1510, these were of limited duration and we have, therefore, evaluated his testimony for the period 1510-1533 accordingly.

## II. Svarūpa Dāmodara<sup>3</sup>

According to Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, Svarūpa Dāmodara lived in Navadvīpa.<sup>4</sup> He was astonished to learn of Caitanya's Sannyāsa but instantly determined to become a sannyāsī himself and after doing so, joined Caitanya in Nīlācala (Purī), where he was one of Caitanya's.

1. C-C Madhya, I, 14.

2. Cait bhā Antya VIII, 33.

3. Svarūpa Dāmodara was known as Puruṣottama Ācāryya before his sannyāsa. Ibid., Antya, X, 52.

4. C-C Madhya X, 101-2.

most trusted and devoted companions. He is said to have enjoyed Caitanya's complete confidence.<sup>1</sup>

The chief source of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's information about Svarūpa Dāmodara seems to have been Raghunātha-dāsa, whom Svarūpa instructed in Vaiṣṇava literature at the instigation of Caitanya himself.<sup>2</sup> Thus Kṛṣṇadāsa's testimony about Svarūpa's originating from Navadvīpa may be accepted as true, even though uncorroborated by other biographers.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja implies that like Murāri Gupta, Svarūpa Dāmodara also composed a Kaṇṭacā,<sup>3</sup> on which Kṛṣṇadāsa himself drew for information, when reconstructing the Madhya and śeṣa līlā of Caitanya's life.<sup>4</sup> There is a suggestion that Kavikarṇapūra also borrowed some of Svarūpa Dāmodara's doctrinal verses for inclusion in his Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dīpikā.<sup>5</sup>

Presumably Svarūpa Dāmodara's Kaṇṭacā was based

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1. C-C, Madhya, XIII, 122, 134-5 etc.

2. C-C, Antya, XIV, 6-9, and recap.

3. C-C Ādi, XVI, 15.

4. C-C, Madhya VIII, 312; Ādi XIII, 16; Ādi XIII, 46; Antya XIV, 7, etc.

5. Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dīpikā 13, 17 and 149.

upon his personal observation of the life of Caitanya. If so, it may have been a completely authentic account of the period from 1510 to 1533. Unfortunately, no copies of this work have so far come to light. Should any copies of the original Kaṭacā of Svarūpa Dāmodara ever come to light, much valuable information about the last 23 years of Caitanya's life <sup>would</sup> will become available.

III. Kavikarnapūra: his Caitanya-Candrodaya-Nāṭaka and Mahākāvya.

In order to evaluate the authenticity of Kavikarnapūra's works, it is necessary to go through his background and career. Kavikarnapūra (ear ornament of poets) is an assumed name or title of Paramānanda Sena. His father's name was Sivānanda Sena. Sivānanda was a Vaidya, living in Kāñcana Pallī (Kāñcana Pallī), a few miles <sup>away</sup> from Navadvīpa. Sivānanda was a distinguished poet. Six of his Padas on Caitanya have been included in the Gaura-Pada-taraṅgīnī. Sivānanda has been described by his son, Kavikarnapūra as one of the principal disciples of Caitanya<sup>1</sup> and his position in the Vaiṣṇava Community of Navadvīpa has been attested by Murāri Gupta, Vṛndāvanadāsa

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1. Gaura-gaṇodeśa-dīpikā, sl, 4 and 177.

Jayānanda, and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja.<sup>1</sup>

Sivānanda had three sons, Caitanyadāsa, Rāmadāsa, and Paramānanda.<sup>2</sup> The name of his eldest son testifies to Sivānanda's devotion to Caitanya. If this son were born soon after Caitanya's first gaining fame, then the boy would have been about 23 at the time of Caitanya's passing away, which would accord with Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's testimony regarding Kavikarṇapūra's age: i.e., that he was about nineteen in 1533.<sup>3</sup>

Kavikarṇapūra has recorded his first meeting with Caitanya.<sup>4</sup> At the age of seven, Paramānanda went with his father to attend the Car festival in Nīlācala and was introduced to Caitanya. The blessings of the renowned saints inspired the boy so intensely that he uttered a Sanskrit verse in praise of Lord Kṛṣṇa.<sup>5</sup> whereupon Caitanya bestowed upon him the title Kavikarṇapūra.

This story may or may not be apocryphal, but

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1. Kaṭacā, iv.17.6; Cait-bhā Antya V and IX, Jayānanda, p. 142; C-C, Antya i, 12-28; X, 139; XII, 11 and 44; XVI, 60 etc.

2. Mahākāvya, ~~XX~~/86, cf. C-C Ādi, X, 59-60.

3. C-C Madhya, II, 2.

4. Nāṭaka, 10/18.

5. C-C Antya, XVI, 60-70.

at least it suggests that Kavikarṇapūra acquired from his father a love of poetry and an aptitude for verse composition.

If Kṛṣṇadāsa's testimony about Kavikarṇapūra's age is correct, we estimate that Kavikarṇapūra first met Caitanya at the time of the Ratha-yātrā in 1521. It is likely that from then on he continued to visit Puri at the same time together with his father and the other Vaiṣṇavas from Navadvīpa, in which case it is possible that he saw Caitanya every year for about 12 years.

The annual Vaiṣṇava party from Navadvīpa would include such venerable figures as Advaita Ācāryya, Śrīvāsa, Murāri, Mukunda and Nityānanda, all of whom possessed considerable knowledge of Caitanya. Thus it is not improbable that Kavikarṇapūra would have been able to glean abundant information about the life and personality of Caitanya, during his annual jaunts to Puri.

It is also not unlikely that though his father and friend Kavikarṇapūra made the acquaintance of Svarūpa Dāmodara, Raghunātha-dāsa, Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī and thereby gained further sidelight on the Saint, whose biographer he was to become.

Furthermore, Kavikarṇapūra seems to have attracted the attention of Pratāparudra Deva of Orissa, who invited him to write a play on the life of Caitanya to dispel the grief of both himself and his subjects, occasioned presumably by Caitanya's death.<sup>1</sup> Pratāparudra may well have supplied some of the material for this drama. Thus, all told, it seems possible to us that Kavikarṇapūra was in possession of much authentic information on the events and circumstances of Caitanya's life.

For Kavikarṇapūra's drama, as stated earlier, however, the most probable date is 1535/6, the time when Murāri Gupta's Caitanya Caritamṛta was produced since the work was written at the behest of Pratāparudradeva, the upper limit for the start of its composition is 1540, the time of Pratāparudra's death. But by that time Kavikarṇapūra was engaged in his Mahākāvya<sup>2</sup> written in A.D. 1542, and aware of the existence of Murāri Gupta's Caitanya-Caritamṛta, which he does not mention in his drama. Thus the drama must be earlier. Since the drama was written expressly to dispel the grief occasioned by Caitanya's death, one would presume that it was commissioned

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1. Nāṭaka Act I, PP. 1-3.

2. Mahākāvya, ~~XX~~ 49.



soon after Caitanya died (1533). Thus 1535/36 seems the most probable date.

Presumably the Nāṭaka was well received by the Vaiṣṇava Community for Kṛṣṇadāsa drew on it heavily for several episodes in his biography of Caitanya.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See B. Majumdar's Caitanya Caritamṛupadana pp. 86-87.

#### IV. Vṛndāvanadāsa: Caitanya Bhāgavata

It appears that the Caitanya Bhāgavata is the first biography written in the vernacular. This work was very popular amongst the Vaiṣṇavas owing to Vṛndāvana's wide reading of early and contemporary literature and to the great pains he took in collecting the evidence to reconstruct the biography of his lord, Caitanya. The work was written in such a simple style that it is intelligible to almost every reader. The author appears to be a sincere Vaiṣṇava and his statement that he had no literary talent comparable with that of Vyāsa<sup>1</sup> is evidence of his humility, one of the qualities of Vaiṣṇavism. He declared that only a Vyāsa could write the biography of Caitanya. But Kavikarṇapūra in his Gaurāṅgodaśa-dīpikā claimed that Vṛndāvanadāsa was an incarnation of Vyāsa.<sup>2</sup>

Jayānanda knew about Vṛndāvana's Caitanya Bhāgavata.<sup>3</sup> It appears that Jayānanda was not influenced by Caitanya Bhāgavata although he gives a running summary of it in the conclusion of his work.<sup>4</sup> Following Jayānanda

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1. Cait-bhā Ādi, I, 153.

2. Caitanya Cariterā upadana p. 184.

3. Jayānanda, p. 3.

4. Ibid., pp. 145-152.

Locanadāsa refers to Vṛndāvanadāsa<sup>1</sup> as the author of Caitanya-Bhāgavata. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja revered Vṛndāvanadāsa and followed him, sometimes literally, in the description of Caitanya's Navadvīpa Līlā and he acknowledged his indebtedness to Vṛndāvanadāsa in almost every chapter of Viśvambhara's Navadvīpa Līlā.<sup>2</sup>

It seems that the work was composed at the instance of his revered guru Nityānanda.<sup>3</sup> Vṛndāvanadāsa is said to have based his work on Nityānanda's oral testimony.<sup>4</sup> Nārāyaṇī,<sup>5</sup> the mother of Vṛndāvana was a child in Navadvīpa at the time when Caitanya manifested many līlās and she may have obtained the information from Śacī Devī and passed it on to her son.<sup>6</sup>

#### The date of its composition

The Caitanya-Bhāgavata is undated. We shall, therefore, attempt to trace the approximate date of its

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1. Locanadāsa, p. 2.

2. C-C Madhya, IV, 4-8; Antya, XX, 64-65 etc.

3. Cait-bhā Ādi, I, 80; Madhya, XXVIII, 183-184 etc.

4. Ibid., Madhya, XX, 156.

5. Ibid., Antya, V, 757.

6. Ibid., Madhya, II, 321-325; Kaṭacā, ii.7.26.

composition by means of internal evidence.

Caitanya started an independent tol of his own in A.D. 1502.<sup>1</sup> Vṛndāvana records that it was a flourishing institution. Presumably it took at least three to four years for Caitanya's remarkable teaching ability to become known and to attract the many students that were to study under his guidance. Vṛndāvana gives a pleasant picture of the cordial relationship between the students and their tutor Caitanya, who discoursed on different subjects sitting on the broad stairs of the bathing ghāṭas of the Ganges.<sup>2</sup> This pleasant association probably started in about 1506. It is recorded that Vṛndāvana<sup>3</sup> lamented being deprived of this opportunity to be one of these students who enjoyed Caitanya's discourse in the open air while the Ganges was flowing smoothly and a cool breeze in the twilight added a serenity to the environment. Vṛndāvana regretted that he was not born in that age. On another occasion while describing Viśvambhara's ecstasies, Vṛndāvana, once again laments missing the chance to witness these religious experiences

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1. See *above* 111

2. Cait-bhā, Ādi, XII, 254-280.

3. Ibid., Ādi, XII, 284.

since they occurred before his time.<sup>1</sup> Caitanya experienced his ecstasies for one year following his Gayā visit.<sup>2</sup> He became an ascetic in A.D. 1509-1510. The evidence is that Vṛndāvana could not yet have been born since it is recorded that Caitanya became an ascetic at the age of 24 and Vṛndāvana states that his mother Nārāyaṇī was only four years old when Caitanya specially blessed her in the courtyard of Śrīvāsa.<sup>3</sup> Caitanya blessed Nārāyaṇī just a few months before accepting ascetism.

The circumstantial evidence is strong enough to suggest that Vṛndāvana was not born until A.D. 1533. There is not a single hint in the whole description of Caitanya-bhāgavata that he had known or witnessed Caitanya or his ecstasies. This is supported by Vṛndāvana's explicit confession that he was unfortunate not to have been able to see Caitanya and witness his ecstasies. Vṛndāvana humbly prayed to his lord Caitanya to grant him the privilege of being born as Caitanya's attendant in each new birth, and to allow him to serve him in each incarnation, even though he could not, however, be able

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1. Ibid., Madhya, VIII, 198.

2. See above p. 112.

3. See p. 279

to witness Caitanya's previous manifestations.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it appears that Vṛndāvana was not born during the lifetime of Caitanya. Had it been so, he would certainly have mentioned it, since such a devotee as Vṛndāvana would have considered it very auspicious to have been born when Caitanya, whom he worshipped as God incarnate, was alive.

We have already shown that Murāri Gupta recorded that he was personally involved in the Vaiṣṇava movement of which Caitanya was the lord.<sup>2</sup> Kavikarṇapūra<sup>3</sup> also mentions his personal association with Caitanya and indeed Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja<sup>4</sup> confirms the fact that Kavikarṇapūra was specially blessed by Caitanya himself but contemporary literature does not speak of Vṛndāvana's association with Caitanya.

Nārāyaṇī was about 28 years old in A.D. 1533, the time of Caitanya's passing away. We know that Nityānanda survived Caitanya. He left his village Ekclākā at the age of twelve.<sup>5</sup> He travelled twenty

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1. Cait bhā, Ādi, XIII, 284-286.

2. See *above* page 153.

3. See *above* p. 274.

4. See *above* p. 274.

5. Cait bhā, Ādi, IX, 100.

years through various sacred places in India. Afterwards he came to Navadvīpa<sup>1</sup> from **Benares**.<sup>2</sup> We know, that he joined Caitanya when the latter was 23 years old.

Therefore, he was 32 years old when he came to Navadvīpa and thus he was senior to Caitanya by nine years.

Nityānanda was 57 years old in 1533. Vṛndāvana states that he wrote Caitanya-Bhāgavata at the instance of Nityānanda. Kavikarnapūra composed Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpika in A.D. 1576.<sup>3</sup> in that he mentions Vṛndāvana's Caitanya-Bhāgavata. But there is no mention of Vṛndāvanadāsa in Kavikarnapūra's Mahākāvya which was written in A.D. 1542. It is possible that Vṛndāvanadāsa was born sometime after 1533 A.D. Let us assume that he was born in about 1534 A.D. The style and the maturity of the work suggests that it was written at least in Vṛndāvana's early twenties. His arrogant attitude<sup>4</sup> towards those who doubted the integrity of his guru

1. Ibid., Ādi, IX, 101.

2. Jayānanda is the singular biographer who states that Nityānanda joined Caitanya at Navadvīpa following his **Benares** visit. Jayananda, p. 54

3. The concluding verse of Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā gives A.D., 1576 as the year of its composition.

4. Cait bhā Ādi, IX, 225; Ādi XVII; <sup>158;</sup> Madhya, XVIII, 223 etc.

Nityānanda implies that he was quite young. We can assume that he was 22 years old when he wrote his book. Had he been older we would have expected him to be more tolerant. Nityānanda was about 77 years old when Caitanya-Bhāgavata was composed. Vṛndāvanadāsa claimed himself as Nityānanda's last disciple.<sup>1</sup>

V. Jayānanda: his Caitanya-Maṅgala.

Jayānanda claimed that his father Subuddhi Misra was a disciple of Gadādhara Paṇḍit, a Navadvīpa associate of Caitanya.<sup>2</sup> It appears that Jayānanda was initiated by Gadādhara Paṇḍit<sup>3</sup> and Jayānanda wrote Caitanya-Maṅgala by the grace of Vīrabhadra, the son of Nityānanda and at the instance of Gadādhara Paṇḍit.<sup>4</sup> Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja mentions Subuddhi Misra as a devout Vaiṣṇava and placed him among Caitanya's disciples.<sup>5</sup>

Jayānanda states that he was born in his

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1. C-bhā Antya, V, 757.

2. Jayānanda, p. 140.

3. Jayānanda, p. 4.

4. Ibid., p. 3.

5. C-C Ādi, X, 109.



maternal grandfather's house<sup>1</sup> and was a Brāhmaṇa by caste. It appears from his description that Caitanya had changed his name from Guṇiā to Jayānanda. According to Jayānanda Caitanya was on his way to Gauṇa from Nīlācala, and was passing through Āmāi-puriā, a village in the Burdwan district, when he was invited to a dinner by Subudhi Misra whereupon Rodaṇī Devī, mother of Jayānanda prepared food for Caitanya when Jayānanda was in her lap. It was during this visit that Caitanya changed Jayānanda's name from Guṇiā to Jayānanda.<sup>2</sup>

According to Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja the Ascetic Caitanya travelled to Gauṇa, Benares, Mṛdāvana, Mathurā and through parts of the Deccan for about six years.<sup>3</sup> This suggests that Caitanya did not leave Nīlācala after 1517. Thus Caitanya had paid a visit to Āmāi-puriā at some time between 1510 and 1516. It suggests that Caitanya went to Subudhi's house before he was 31 since he became a sannyāsī at the age of 24 whereupon he spent six years in Pilgrimage. Thus it is likely that Jayānanda was two years old by the time when Caitanya

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1. Jayānanda, p. 3.

2. Ibid., p. 140.

3. C-C Madhya. I, 14.

was said to have changed his name because Rodanī cooked food for Caitanya when the infant was on her lap. This shows that Jayānanda was at least two years old in 1516 and we may assume that he was born in about 1514.

Jayānanda's Caitanya-Maṅgala is undated. He mentions Vṛndāvanadāsa's Caitanya-Bhāgavata.<sup>1</sup> If Vṛndāvanadāsa's Caitanya-Bhāgavata was written in about 1554, Jayānanda wrote Caitanya-Maṅgala some time after this date. Most probably the work was written before 1565, otherwise we would expect him to mention the works of the Vṛndāvana Gosvāmīs. Whereas he records the following books which had been already written: i. Srī-Kṛṣṇa-Vijaya of Guṇarāja Khāna. ii. Jayadeva, Vidyāpati and Candī-dāsa's works (Kṛṣṇa-līlā was described in the above works). iii. Caitanya-Carita in verse and Caitanyā-ṣṭaka, as well as a Caitanya-Sahasra-nāma in 100 verses by Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma, iv. Govinda-Vijaya by Paramānanda Gupta. v. Gauridāsa Paṇḍit is said to have composed a series of poems or songs. vi. Gopāla Vasu's Caitanya-Maṅgala song,<sup>2</sup> (See B. Majumdar op.cit., pp. 232-249 for a critical discussion of Jayānanda's

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1. See above p. 278.

2. Jayānanda, p. 3.

additions and errors).

Jayānanda has divided the Caitanya-~~Maṅgala~~ into nine sections or Khandas: i. Ādi ii. Nadiā iii. Vairāgya. iv. Sannyāsa. v. Utkala. vi. Tīrtha vii. Prakāśa. viii Vijaya and ix. Uttara Khaṇḍa.

VI. Locanadāsa: his Caitanya-~~Maṅgala~~

Locanadāsa belonged to the Vaidya caste. His father/<sup>was</sup> Kamalākāśa and Sadānandī his mother. Locanadāsa came from Kogrāma in the Burdwan district, according to the author himself.<sup>1</sup>

Locana claims himself as a disciple of Narahari Sarkara of the Śrī-Khaṇḍa.<sup>2</sup> Narahari Sarkar was a favourite of Caitanya.<sup>3</sup> Narahari is well known for his poetical contribution to the Vaiṣṇava literature, especially as an expounder of Nāgarāvāda, for he symbolised his religious beliefs in the form of womanly love, as is related in the Bhāgavata where the gopīs felt for Kṛṣṇa. Presumably this feeling of Narahari has been vehemently opposed by Vṛndāvanadāsa since Narahari incorporated this erotic

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1. Locanadāsa, pp. 189-190.

2. Ibid., p. 29.

3. Ibid., p. 2.

tendency in the life of Caitanya. This may well be the reason why Vṛndāvanadāsa did not, however, mention Narahari Sarkār in Caitanya-Bhāgavata.<sup>1</sup> Presumably the complete absence of any reference to Narahari in Vṛndāvanadāsa's work, motivated Locanadāsa to conduct Caitanya-~~Maṅgala~~ in the light of his guru's philosophy and to emphasize Narahari's important position among the principal bhaktas of Caitanya. Dr. B. Majumdar gives the following reasons for the composition of Caitanya-Maṅgala: i. to emphasize the significant relation between his guru Narahari Sarkār and Caitanya; ii. to instal Narahari among the Pāñca-tāṭṭva; iii. to popularise the worship of Nāgarāṣvāda. (p. 261).

Locana mentions Vṛndāvanadāsa's Caitanya-Bhāgavata.<sup>2</sup> Thus the Caitanya-~~Maṅgala~~ was written after Vṛndāvana's composition of Caitanya-Bhāgavata. Dr. B. Majumdar thinks that this was written before 1576 since Locana hesitated to refer to the doctrine of Avatara, whereas Kavikarṇapūra explicitly refers to the doctrine of Avatāra in his Gaurāṅgāṇodesa-saṁpikā which

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1. Cāṇ- bhā, Ādi, XV, 30.

2. See *above* p. 279.

was written in 1576.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Majumdar's argument seems convincing.

Locana may well be influenced by the holy Bible in his description of the saint's life since the story of Advaita's recognition of Caitanya's divinity even before his birth is a reminiscent of the story of Simeon and the infant Jesus, as told in St. Luke's Gospel (2.25-33) and this story may have inspired Locana because by the time he wrote the Catholic mission was active in Bengal.

Locana divides the Caitanya-~~Maṅgala~~ into four Khaṇḍas, i.e. Sūtra, Ādi, Madhya and ~~Śeṣa~~. Some sections of the work appear to be professed free translations of Murāri Gupta's Caitanya-Caritamṛta.

For a discussion of the omissions, errors and additions, see Dr. B. Majumdar, op. cit. pp. 250-280.

#### VII. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja: his Caitanya Caritamṛta.

Kṛṣṇadāsa has divided his work into three parts; the Ādi, Madhya, Antya ~~līlā~~, and is composed of 62 chapters.

This Bengali work contains 15,000 ślokaś. The

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1. See B. Majumdar, pp. op.cit., 254-255.

Ādi līlā is about the boyhood and the pre-sannyāsa period; the Madhya līlā records the period of the Saint's travelling the Antya līlā treats of the passive and the final years at Purī of the Saint.

It appears that Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja was Vaidya by caste. He emerges from Jhāmātpūra village in the Burdwan<sup>1</sup> district. He became an orphan at an early age. The description recorded by the author himself suggests that at the instance of Nityānanda, a Navadvīpa associate of Caitanya, in a dream the author begged his way from Burdwan to Vṛndāvana.<sup>2</sup> He became very popular among the Vaiṣṇavas because of his piety, honesty and patience.

Kṛṣṇadāsa had the privilege to come into contact with the Gosvāmīs<sup>3</sup> of Vṛndāvana, who directly and indirectly witnessed some of the līlās of Caitanya. Kṛṣṇadāsa professes that he had made use of the reminiscences of these Gosvāmīs.<sup>4</sup> Kṛṣṇadāsa's Guru<sup>5</sup> Raghunāthadāsa is said

1. C-C Ādi, V, 159.

2. Ibid., Ādi, V, 159-177.

3. Ibid., Ādi, I, 18-19.

4. Ibid., Antya, III, 256-7; Antya, XIV, 6-9.

5. C-C Antya, XX, 88.

to have lived in Nīlācala for sixteen years.<sup>1</sup> Raghunātha studied under the guidance of Svarūpa Dāmodara, the most important associates of Caitanya at Nīlācala. Sāvatana Goṣvāmī and Rupa Goṣvāmī had close contact with Caitanya. Thus it appears that some parts of Kṛṣṇadāsa's work were based on the first-hand knowledge of different Bhaktas. Apart from the Vṛndāvana Goṣvāmī, Kṛṣṇadāsa declares that he collected material for reconstructing the Saint's life on the work of Murāri Gupta, Dāmodara Svarūpa and Vṛndāvanadāsa.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that Kṛṣṇadāsa did not acknowledge his indebtedness to Kavikarṇapūra whereas some descriptions of his work show that he was considerably influenced by Kavikarṇapūra's.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja acknowledges the Vṛndāvana Goṣvāmī as his śikṣā Gurus.<sup>3</sup> He pays homage to Raghunāthadāsa and Rupa Goṣvāmī in almost every chapter of his work.<sup>4</sup>

Kṛṣṇadāsa claims to have composed this work

1. Ibid., Ādi, X, 91.

2. Ibid., Ādi, XIII, 44-48.

3. Ibid., Ādi, I, 18-19.

4. Ibid., Ādi, VIII, 80.

with the permission of Vṛndāvanadāśa.<sup>1</sup> It is said to have been undertaken under the inspiration of the Vaiṣṇavas of Vṛndāvana as a supplement to Vṛndāvana's work since the latter did not fully treat the last phase of the Saint's life.<sup>2</sup>

It appears that Kṛṣṇadāsa read the scholarly and authoritative works of Rūpa, Sanātana and other theologians of the cult. He had attained a mature old age<sup>3</sup> when he began to write it. Dr. Majumdar after examining the internal evidence gives 1615 as the date of its composition.<sup>4</sup>

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1. C-C, Maṇḍya, I, 8; also Ādi, VIII, 76.

2. Ibid., Ādi, VIII, 41-45, 66-67.

3. Ibid., Antya, XX, 84-86.

4. See B. Majumdar, op.cit., pp. 320-326.



## APPENDIX

From the literature of the sect, it appears that in 1510 Caitanya left Nīlācala on an extensive pilgrimage to South India. This pilgrimage lasted for two years and was marked by the conversion of Rāyarāmānanda, a governor of Vidyānagara under the suzerainty of King Pratāparudra of Orissa, on the bank of Godāvarī. There ensued a theological, philosophical and emotional conversation. Caitanya blessed him and was eulogised in return. Delighted Rāmānanda expressed a desire to join the circles of his intimate and faithful followers. Caitanya accepted him as one of his intimate disciples.

The accounts list the names of shrines, rivers, lakes and hills as well as villages and cities, as places which he visited during his pilgrimage to South India. The holy places of the south became the holiest because of Caitanya's touch. He delivered the people of the country on the pretext of a pilgrimage. The people of the south were diverse, some scholars, some ritualists, some utter sceptics but the marvellous effect of the sight of Caitanya turned them to Vaiṣṇavas. In the course of this tour he discovered Brahma-saṁhitā and Kṛṣṇakarmāmṛta and he had copies made of each of these books and introduced them to the delight of his disciples. He returned to Nīlācala and directed

Nityānanda to propagate the new faith in Gaura and in turn Nityānanda carried this mission successfully.

In 1513 Caitanya set out for Vṛndāvana via Gaura. It was at Rāmakeli that he met scholarly Sanātana Gosvāmī and his brother Rūpa Gosvāmī, two important officials under Husena Saha. They were already known to Caitanya through their humble letters. Moved by his deep faith they became his followers. Caitanya now wanted to resume his journey to Vṛndāvana but Sanātana pointed out that it was not proper to start on a pilgrimage with a million men. Caitanya cancelled this Vṛndāvana trip for the time being, but went to Kānāya Nāṭasālā and then to Śāntipura at Advaita's house where his mother Śacī entertained him for few days. He took leave of them and returned to Nīlācala. Once again, Caitanya left Nīlācala for Vṛndāvana in 1514. He spent four days at Kāśī and then went to Vṛndāvana. Then he came to Prayāga and met Rūpa Gosvāmī whom he taught in Vaiṣṇava philosophy whereupon he directed him to settle at Vṛndāvana. Caitanya was introduced with Vallabha Bhaṭṭa. Resuming his journey he came to Kāśī again, and met Sanātana and taught him in Vaiṣṇava literature and instructed him to make Vṛndāvana the academic and religious centre and compose the entire body of theological, philosophical and emotional literature for the new faith. It was at Kāśī that Caitanya converted Prakāśānanda, the renowned Vedantist of the time and his thousands of followers into his new faith.

In 1515/16 he returned to Nīlācala and lived there permanently for the rest of his life. He lived at the Totā-Āśrama of Kāśī Misra, the royal guru, and this Āśrama with all its natural beauties, became a source of inspiration for his spiritual quest. The remaining eighteen years of his career were comparatively uneventful, but the annual exodus of his Gaurīya bhaktas, as well as the scholars, devotees and admirers broke the monotony. Caitanya composed Sikṣāṣṭaka containing eight verses and recited them in the presence of Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāvarāmananda.

His love-in-separation for Kṛṣṇa reached such a pitch of intensity that he could no more <sup>come</sup> in touch with public life and became incapable of taking care of himself. Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmananda watched and tended him with loving solititude. The last twelve years of his life consisted of emotional experiences of religious rapture. His intense devotion and his beautiful visions grew ever in intensity. The devotees noticed this marked strain of emotionalism in their Lord until at last his physical frame broke down and he passed away in 1533.

Legends there are of his disappearance in the temple and in the image of Jagannātha, as well as attributing the death to a wound in his left foot from a brickbat in the course of frenzied dancing, which brought on a septic fever resulting in a common human death.