

# FROM ASS TO SWAN

## The Secret to Stepping Beyond Sectarianism and Useless Conflict

Much malcontent centered on a leading administrator, a *grhastha*, and when it became obvious that he was peculating large sums, the *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* resolved to give him nothing more. They stopped going out for preaching and *bhikṣā* and deputed Śrīmad Śrīdhara Mahārāja to verbalize their concerns to their Gurudeva. Śrīla Sarasvatī Thākura was pacing up and down the veranda of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha chanting *japa* when Śrīdhara Mahārāja approached him, yet he stopped and listened intently. His response was unexpected: “Why are you grumbling? Your minds have become distorted. Others may have insufficient judiciousness to care about the absolute goal, but why don’t you concentrate on that? Have you come for *Hari-bhajana*, or to count money? Can you not reform your godbrother? If I had to employ a manager as expert as he, I would have to pay a considerable salary. Suppose he is defalcating. Why begrudge him? If you also need money, I will arrange it for you.” Śrīdhara Mahārāja bowed his head and admitted, “Our way of thinking was mistaken.” He returned to his anxiously waiting godbrothers and explained, “We have come to perform *bhajana*, not to acquire money or prestige. If others are bent on destroying themselves by looting, we shouldn’t be preoccupied with them, but should simply focus on our own *bhajana*.”

– Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava Vol 1. p106-7

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura did not accept that the quintessential Gauḍīya Maṭha could be polluted by the misbehavior of any delinquent members. He delineated the difference between genuine disciples and motivated followers, between the real, transcendental Gauḍīya Maṭha and its outer semblance:

Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha does not and cannot have anything in common with those who duplicitously join it with a motive to misuse divine knowledge to serve their own selfish ends. Feigned *dikṣā* and obtainment of divine knowledge are never identical. Śrī Caitanya and His sincere devotees are eternally present in Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha.

– Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava Vol 1. p100