

Invented *Kīrtana*

— Excerpts from Bhakti Vikāsa Swami’s *Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava*, Vol 2.

Śrī Rādhā-Rāmana-caraṇa dāsa Bābājī was the best-known among various “inspired saints” who had introduced various “new *mantras*” for singing in “*kīrtana*”.

Caraṇa dāsa’s doctrine was that the *mahā-mantra* should be recited only silently in *japa*, not aloud in *kīrtana*: and he introduced his own *kīrtana mantra*: (*bhaja*) Nitāi Gaura Rādhe Śyāma, Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma.

Emphasizing that the specific means given by Lord Caitanya for delivering the entire universe was loud chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, both Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura rejected as malicious violence to all *jīvas* Caraṇa dāsa’s propaganda against it, and declared his contrived jingle unauthorized and offensive. Yet few could appreciate this rigid opposition, for even neutral persons reasoned that, although new, the rhyme consisted solely of the holy names and was sung sweetly and with obvious devotion by genuine *sādhus*.

Caraṇa dāsa was professedly a grand disciple of Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī, who however did not approve of his alleged discipular descendant’s invented chant. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura called it *chada-gana* (a doggerel rendition) and *cchuñcora kīrtana*, insisting that the real *kīrtana* of Mahāprabhu is and always will be: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

When Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura asked how he had received his new “*mantra*,” Caraṇa dāsa said it had come to him in a trance. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura told him it was balderdash and if he would abandon it they could preach together. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura disapproved that Caraṇa dāsa and his followers, as typical *prākṛta-sahajiyās*, openly and regularly discussed, sung of, and enacted Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes with the *gopīs*.

In 1904, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had a prolonged debate with Caraṇa dāsa, who finally conceded that his “*mantra*” was unauthorized and he had been wrong to propagate it. Yet he did not withdraw it. Within six months he exhibited symptoms of pathological madness, and soon thereafter died. Nevertheless, Rāmadāsa Bābājī continued to spread that bogus *mantra* throughout Orissa, Bengal, and Vṛndāvana.

Hari-mohana Pattnaik, an income tax officer for Cuttack, once asked Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura why he so strongly opposed that chant, since it consisted of the holy names of Nitāi, Gaura, Rādhe, and Śyāma. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explained,

“We have to follow *śāstra*. *Kali-santarāṇa Upaniṣad* clearly states: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Śrī Caitanya did not say ‘Nitāi-Gaura, Rādhe Śyāma,’ but gave us the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. We cannot introduce manmade imaginary *kīrtana*.”

Whenever Rāmadāsa Bābājī’s followers encountered Gauḍīya Maṭha members they would loudly chant their bogus *mantra* just to antagonize them. On the way from their Jhanjapita Maṭha, to the Ṭoṭā-gopīnātha temple, they would deliberately pass by Śrī Puruṣottama Maṭha bellowing “Nitāi-Gaura, Rādhe Śyāma.” In response, a tin drum was kept at Śrī Puruṣottama Maṭha for beating as an alarm signal whenever Rāmadāsa’s followers came by. Upon hearing it, the devotees of Śrī Puruṣottama Maṭha would rush out and energetically perform Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana* to drown out the *prākṛta-sahajiyās*’ din. Eventually Śrī Rāmadāsa Bābājī told his adherents to make another route to Ṭoṭā-gopīnātha and not disturb the Śrī Puruṣottama Maṭha devotees.

During his stay in Puri in 1936, Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had Ananta Vāsudeva Prabhu lead a *kīrtana* procession around the *dhāma*, with the specific order to enter Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura’s *samādhi* (occupied and managed by Caraṇa dāsa’s followers) ebulliently chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* preceded by the alternating refrains *Mahāprabhur deoyā nāma haridāser gaoyā nāma*, “the name given by Mahāprabhū, the name sung by Haridāsa,” and *bhaktivinoder gaoyā nāma*, “the name sung by Bhaktivinoda.”