

CHAPTER-V

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Relevance of the study

In the foregoing chapters we have pointed out in detail the different aspects of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism particularly its characteristic feature, forms, Bhaktirasas, influence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in Eastern India and so on. But the study of any subject without its contemporary relevance conveys no meaning. Therefore, the contemporary relevance of the Bhakti movement of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya demands to be discussed for the justification of the study. In this chapter our humble attempt will be to focus the contemporary relevance of the Bhakti movement of Śrīkṛṣṇa Caitanya.

As it is pointed out in earlier chapters that Śrīkṛṣṇa Caitanya's Bhakti movement is not only a religious movement but it was also a socio-cultural movement since it profoundly influenced the socio-cultural life of the people of eastern India particularly of the two states viz. Bengal and Orissa. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism or Caitanyaism is a devotional religion which is based on humanism, socialism and religious liberation. These aspects are said to be the social contributions of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Love for all, sympathy for the downtrodden ones are the unique attraction of caitanyaism for the modern savants. Caitanyaism has two distinct

aspects, one is religious and philosophical side and the other is social side of the religion. In its religious and philosophical aspect the contribution of Vṛndāvan school is tremendous. While the contribution of the Navadwip school is great in respect of social side. Hence, jointly the Caitanyaism is a devotional religion with the characteristic features of socialism, humanism and religious liberalism. Here it appears that The philosophical contribution of the Vṛndāvan Goswāmīs and the social contribution of Navadwip school jointly played a vital role to shaped the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism otherwise called Caitanyaism.

Śrīkrṣṇa Caitanya's devotional religion took place in the (16th) sixteenth century but its influence continued till the 17th (seventh) and the 18th (eighteenth) centuries in both the states of Bengal and Orissa. In the fields of literature, history, religion and culture the Caitanyaism brought the devotional Renaissance. The Renaissance of the 19th (nineteenth) century in Bengal was only meant for the educated people, but it never exerted influence on the village life of Bengal. But the influence of Caitanya movement moved all the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated common people of Bengal. The impact of Caitanya movement was so tremendous that it spreaded over the villages and the Cities and finally crossing the boundaries of Bengal it spreaded in the neighbouring states of eastern India.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is basically the religion of man. Before the advent of Śrī Caitanya, Candīdās, the famous vaiṣṇava poet of Bengal said that ‘savār upare mānuṣ satya, tāhār uparnai’

i.e. Above all man is true, there is no higher truth than man.’¹

Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī, the writer of ‘Caitanyacaritāmṛta’ also said almost in similar manner-

Kṛṣṇer yatek khelā, sarvottam naralīlā,

Naravapu tāhār swarup |

Gopaveśe veṇukar, navakiśor naṭavar

Naralīlār hay anurūp ||²

i.e. of all love sports of Kṛṣṇa, the most excellent is His love-sports of man. The human body is the supreme form of deity. In other words, in Caitanyaism man is the living image of God. Hence, humanism, socialism and religious liberalism were the general features of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in the 16th century.

Here an humble attempt will be made to discuss with on the contemporary relevance of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism under the following heads-

Selflessness and service to mankind-

To be a true Vaiṣṇava, one should be detached from earthly possessions. Attachment to worldly possessions distracts a man from the pursuit of higher truth. Thus we see when sanātana Goswāmī met with Śrī Caitanya at Kāśī, he advised him (Sanātana Goswāmī) to be free from worldly desire. Being free from selflessness one should serve mankind. In Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism the dignity of service to mankind is glorified. In the Caitanyacaritāmṛta Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj writes-

Bhāratbhūmite haila manuṣya janma yār |

Janma sārthak kari kara para upakār ||³

i.e. He who is born as a human being in Bhārata, should help others in distress making his birth fruitful. This high ideal of Caitanyaism is quite relevant and true to birth even today. The love for mankind made Śrī Caitanya the leader of the suffered people. Truly he was the symbol of compassion.

Secularism and communal harmony- In the devotional religion of Śrī Caitanya there is no room for communalism or narrowness. Śrī Caitanya's Bhakti movement is purely based on secularism. It is not that he was against caste-system but his Vaiṣṇavism raised him far above the caste system. His samkīrtan was open to all people irrespective of caste

colour and creed. One needs to be neither a paṇḍit nor a saint or a high class Brahmin a non-Vaiṣṇava. Śrī Caitanya said even a non-brahmin can become a guru (preceptor) for a Brahmin disciple.

In the Caitanyacaritāmṛta Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj writes-

Kivā vipra kiva nyāsī Śudra Kene Kay |

yei kṛṣṇatattvavettā se-i guru hay ||⁴

That is, not only a Brahmin or an ascetic, but one who is the knower of the metaphysical truth about Kṛṣṇa is entitled to be a guru or preceptor. So why a person is called a Śudra if he worships Kṛṣṇa. Vṛndāvandās in his Caitanyabhāgavata also writes-

Caṇḍāl caṇḍāl nahe, yadi Kṛṣṇa vale |

Vipra Vipra nahe, yadi asatpathe cale ||⁵

That is, a Caṇḍāl (low caste Hindu) is not a caṇḍāl, if he sings the name of Kṛṣṇa. On the other hand, a Brahmin is not a brāhmin, if he pursues the wrong path.

Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, the writer of the Caitanyacaritāmṛta quoting the instruction of Śrī Caitanya to Sanātana Goswāmī writes-

Kubuddhi chāḍiyā kara śravan-kīrtan |

Acirāte pave tave kṛṣṇer caraṇ ||

Nīcajāti nahe kṛṣṇabhajane ayogya |

Satkula vipra nahe bhajaner yogya ||

Yei bhaje sie vaḍa, abhakta hīna chār |

kṛṣṇa bhajane nāhi jāti-kulādi-vicār ||⁶

That is, a man belonging to low caste is not unfit for the worship of Kṛṣṇa; whereas a man hailing from a noble family is not fit for adoration of Kṛṣṇa if he pursues evil course of conduct. He who adorns Kṛṣṇa is great indeed. In the worship of Kṛṣṇa there is no distinction relating caste and creed.

However, we may refer to here the first two associates of Śrī Caitanya who sang the name of Hari in every house of Nadiyā. They were Śrīla Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrīla Haridās Thākura. Nityānanda is revered as another Prabhu (Lord of a sect) by the Vaiṣṇava circle of Bengal. Nityānanda popularly called Nitāi was an Avadhūta. According to Caitanyabhāgavata of Vṛndāvandās, Nityānanda was born in the village Ekacākā in the Birbhum district of west Bengal. His father's name was Hāḍo ojhā and the name of his mother was Padmāvati compare-

hāḍo ojhā name pita, mātā, padmāvati |

ekacākā name grām Gauḍeśwar tathi ||⁷

Śrīla Thākura Haridās was a Muslim. The Bhāgavata religion which is propagated by Śrī Caitanya was above communalism. It was not confined to the upper caste only or to a particular section of the people. Śrī Caitanya's close associate Śrīla Thākura Haridās was appointed Ācārya (Preceptor) though he was born in a Muslim family of the village called Buḍan in Yaśohar district.

Vṛndāvandās wrote about Thākura Haridās that all Vaiṣṇavas had a great love for Haridās; likewise Haridās also had great respect for all Vaiṣṇavas-

Sarva vaiṣṇaver prīti Haridās prati |

Haridās Karen savāre bhakti ati ||⁸

Quoting the Sanātana Goswāmī's observation about the significant aspects of Thākura Haridās's Sādhanā, Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī writes in his Caitanyacaritāmṛta-

Sanātan kahe tomā kevā ān |

Mahāprabhura gane tumi mahābhāgyavān ||

Avatār kārya prabhura nāmer pracāre |

Sei nijakārya Karen tomā dvāre ||

Pratyaha kara tin lakṣa nām-samkīrtan |

Savār āge kara nāmer mahimā kathan ||

Āpani ācare, keha nā kare pracār |

Pracār karaye keha nā kare ācār ||

Ācār pracār nāmer kara dui kārya |

Tumi sarva guru, sarva jagater ārya ||⁹

That is, amongst the close associates of Mahāprabhu (Śrī Caitanya) you (Haridās Ṭhākur) are matchless indeed, since you have the good fortune to be engaged by Mahāprabhu Himself for the propagation of the glory of the chanting the name of God. You recite the name of God three lakh times a day. There are some who recite God's name but do not propagate while others propagate the name of God but do not practise. You are a perfect embodiment of practice and propagation of God's name. Therefore, you are the preceptor of all and most pious and devoted Vaiṣṇava. You are blessed indeed.

We may refer to here another incident about Ṭhākur Haridās, Advaita Ācārya, though a Brahmin, during the Śrāddha ceremony of his

mother, offered the Śrāddhapātra to Yavana Haridās Ṭhākur since he was the best amongst the Vaiṣṇavas compare-

Ācārya kahen, - ‘tumi nā kariha bhay’ |

Sei ācariva yei śāstramata hay ||

‘tumi khāile hay koṭī-brāhmaṇ-bhojan’ |

Eta vali’ śrāddha-pātra karāila bhojan ||¹⁰

It was not a small matter in those days of Brāhmanical authority. This incidence proves the restoration of Vaiṣṇubhakti parāyaṇa’. Yavan Haridās spread Vaiṣṇavism. Rāmānanda Basu and other noble personalities of Kulīngram accepting the discipleship of Yavan Haridās led their lives devotedly. However, Nityānanda, the other close follower of Śrī Caitanya introduced the ‘ciḍā-Mahotsava’ and thereby he brought democracy in Vaiṣṇavism.¹¹ It may be mentioned here that Nityānanda was the first man who brought socialism in religion.

As it is said earlier Śrī Caitanya rescued Kāzi of Navadwip. Besides, while coming back from Vṛndāvan, Śrī Caitanya blessed ‘a group of Pāthān soldiers at a place near ‘Sorār’ in Uttarpradesh. Thence forward this place is famous by the name ‘Pāthān-Vaiṣṇava village.’ The devotional religion of Śrī Caitanya was so peaceful and divine that it has

a powerful appeal to attract even non-Hindus. A large number of Muslims, Buddhists, Śākas and the Nātha yogis of Bengal were deeply influenced by the Caitanya movement. Apart from this, many Christian people are also attracted by the Caitanyaism and it is because of the International society of Kṛṣṇa consciousness (Iskon) founded by Śrīlo Abhayācaranāravinda Bhaktivedānta Swāmī prabhupāda, many Christian people of the world accepted Vaiṣṇavism in the 20th century. At present many Iskon temples have been established in the major cities of the world. It is the glaring proof of the influence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and the contemporary relevance of it.

Liberalism of the Hindu orthodoxy-

Śrī Caitanya's Gauḍīya vaiṣṇavism was a protest against the Brahmanical tyranny and Hindu orthodoxy. Samkīrtan was the method of Caitanya movement. Since it was open to all the castes, so it released the man from Brahmanical tyranny and Hindu orthodoxy. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj in his Caitanyacaritāmṛta wrote that in order to free man from all sorts of narrowness, Gaurāṅga incarnated Himself.

‘sarvalok nistārite Gaur avatār’ |¹¹

Vṛndāvandās also wrote in his Caitanyabhāgavat that samkīrtan is the only religion in Kaliyuga and Śrīcaitanya, the son of Śaci appeared on earth in order to restore samkīrtan.

Kaliyage 'dharma' hay 'harisamkīrtan' |

Etadarthe avatīrṇa śrīśacinandan ||

Ei kahe bhāgavate sarvatattvasār |

'Kīrtan' nimitta Gauracandra-avatār ||

Kaliyage sarva dharma 'hari-samkīrtan' |

Sav Prakāśilen Caitanya-Nārāyan ||¹²

i.e. the Kaliyuga dharma is only the singing of God's name and for which Śrī Caitanya, the son of Śaci appeared in the earth. The essence of this fundamental truth is the version of the Bhāgavata. Gauracandra incarnated himself for the sake of 'kīrtan' (i.e. singing God's name). In Kaliyuga the 'hari-samkīrtan' is the supreme Piety. Everything is displayed by Caitanya, the God Nārāyaṇa.

Śrī Caitanya spread Samkīrtan among the mass people of Navadvīp. He started a movement against orthodox Brāhmanical tyranny and against the social and religious aggressive attitude of the Muslim rulers. Śrī Caitanya's Vaiṣṇavism was against the ritualistic customs of

the then society. His Samkīrtan, therefore, established religious equality of all people. He declared that all are equal before God. Caitanya's samkīrtan was open for all irrespective of caste, colour and creed. It was open for all, the poor and the rich, the high and the low, Brahmin and Śūdra, scholars and illiterate masses.

This tradition is prevalent even today. In a Samkīrtan party anybody can participate irrespective of caste and creed. Certainly this indicates the contemporary relevance of the Caitanya movement.

Educational encouragement and the recitation of the Bhāgavata-

Nimāi was well versed in Sanskrit grammar. Before accepting asceticism he taught Sanskrit grammar particularly the Kalāpa Vyākaraṇa to students. Since grammar is said to be the very face of the Śāstras (Vyākaraṇam mukhanucyate); so he sincerely taught Sanskrit grammar to numerous students of his tol. It is stated that on his way to his first visit to Śrihaṭṭa, he taught Sanskrit grammar to different students in East Bengal and thereby he encouraged the pupils to learn Sanskrit grammar.

Besides wheresoever Śrī Caitanya went, he explained the Bhāgavata, the holy scripture of the Vaiṣṇavas to his followers. It may be worthnoting here that among the commentaries on the Bhāgavata, he

preferred to Śrīdharaswāmi's commentary on the Bhāgavata. According to him Bhāgavata is the essence of the Vedānta.

Śrīdharaswāmi-prasāde bhāgavat jāni |

Jagatguru śrīdharswāmī 'guru' kari māni ||

Śrīdharānugata kara bhāgavat-vyākhyān |

Abhimān chādi' bhaja kṛṣṇa-bhagavān ||¹³

i.e. I know the essence of the Bhāgavata due to the explanation of Śrīdharaswāmi; Śrīdharswāmī is the preceptor of the world and I recognise him as my guru.

So one should explain the Bhāgavata according to Śrīdhara. Keeping aside egotism one should worship Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Vṛndāvandās also says-

Save puruṣārtha 'bhakti' bhāgavate hay |

'Premarūp bhāgavat' cāri vede kay ||

Cāri ved-'dadhi', bhāgavat navanīta |¹⁴

i.e. Bhakti (devotion), the supreme human pursuit occurs from the Bhāgavata. The four vedas glorify the Bhāgavata as the embodiment of love. The four vedas are said to be the curd while the Bhāgaveda is the

cream. Moreover it is said in the Caitanyabhāgavata that there occurs no disaster in the family if any person keeps the Bhāgavata in his house with devotion. Besides, the worship of Bhāgavata is nothing but the adoration of Kṛṣṇa. Recitation of the Bhāgavata and listening of it are full of piety.

bhāgavata-pustako thākaye yār ghare |

kona amaṅgal nāhi yāy tathākare ||

bhāgavat pūjile kṛṣṇer pujā hay |

bhāgavat-paṭhan-śvavan bhaktimay ||¹⁵

Therefore, Śrī Caitanya advised all the Vaiṣṇavas to recite (i.e. go through) or to listen the recitation of the Bhāgavata, since the recitation of the bhāgavata is the best mark of a vaiṣṇava.

Even now the bhāgavata is the holy scripture of the Vaiṣṇavas. The Vaiṣṇavas place the Bhāgavata on a stool and never keep it on the ground.

Upliftment of the downtrodden and the womenfolk-

The Vaiṣṇava movement of Śrī Caitanya was a socio-religious movement in Bengal. Śrī Caitanya, Advaita Ācārya and Nityānanda by their devotional movement redeemed the illiterate commoners of Bengal from the clutches of medieval Brahmanical tyranny. Śrī Caianya advised

Advaita Ācārya to spread his religion among the women, non-Brahmanas and illiterate masses. His religion and saṁkīrtan party were open for all classes of people high and low. Through this powerful saṁkīrtan, Śrī Caitanya spread his tenet of Vaiṣṇavism of love and equality over entire Navadvīp, whole of Bengal and eastern India.

After the disappearance of Śrī Caitanya in Nīlācala, Nityānanda spread Kṛṣṇa-nāma among all the people whether Brāhmanas or Caṇḍālas. There was not any caste-bar, caṇḍāla, yavana or anybody might join in the Saṁkīrtan. Even woman folk were allowed in the Saṁkīrtan. Thus the whole of eastern India was over-whelmed with the spirit of Caitanyaism. Regarding the religious matters the Caitanyaism was extremely liberal. The teachings of Caitanyaism help universal fellow feelings. Hence, the Gauḍīya vaiṣṇavism is so popular among the commoners till today which indicates the contemporary relevance of the Gauḍīya vaiṣṇavism. Contemporary relevance of the marks of Bhakti in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

To Vaiṣṇavas tulasi or basil is very holy. It is regarded to be the holy lotus-foot of Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇa pādapadama). In the skandapurāna the service to Tulasi is narrated in detail. It is said that by the sight of Tulasi, all sins are removed. The body becomes purified if one touches Tulasa. The disease is cured if one salutes it. Yama, the god of death is afraid of it

one sprinkles water on Tulasi. There grows attraction towards Kṛṣṇa if one plants it and there occurs devoted attachment if one offers Tulasi to the feet of Kṛṣṇa.

Yā dṛṣṭā nikhilāghasamghaśamanī sprṣṭā vapuḥpāvanī

Rogānāmbhivanditānirasanī siktā'ntakatrāsini |

Pratyāsattividhāyini bhagavataḥ kṛṣṇasya samropitā

Nyastā taccarane vimuktiphaladā tasyai tulasyai namaḥ ||¹⁶

So by sight, touch, remembrance, celebration, glorification, salutation, panegyric, transplanting, serving and daily worshipping the tulasi becomes source of all happiness. Thus runs the Skandapurāṇa-

dṛṣṭā sprṣṭā tathā dhyātā kīrtitā namitā stutā |

ropitā sevitā nityam pūjitā tulasī śubhā ||¹⁷

Therefore, one who renders service daily to Tulasi in these nine fold manners, resides in the abode of Hari for ever.

Navadhā tulasim devim ye bhajanti dine dine |

yagakoṭisahasrāṇi te vasanti haregrhe ||¹⁸

Mahāprabhu had candid regard for Tulasī. In the Caitanya bhāgavata Mahāprabhu's service to Tulasī is delineated. He said to his

disciples that if he would not render service to Tulasī none should love him. It is said that one person moved ahead with Tulasī and Mahāprabhu followed him having his sight to Tulasī. He kept Tulasī by his side when he was seated for counting God's name. In the regard the following issue may be cited.

Tulasīr bhakti eve śuna man diyā |

Yerūpe Kailen līlā tulasī lai yā ||

Ek kṣudra bhāṇḍe divya mṛttikā puriyā |

Tulasī dekhē sei ghaṭe āropiyā ||

prabhu vale, - 'āmi tulasīre nā dekhile |

bhālo nāhi vāsoṅ yena matsa vine jale ||

yave cale samkhyā- nām kariyā graham |

tulasī lai yā agre cale ekjan ||

paścāte calen prabhu tulasī dekhiyā |

paḍaye ānandadhārā śrīaṅga vahiyā ||

samkhyā-nām laite ye sthāne prabhu vaise |

tathāy rākhen tulasīre prabhu pāśe ||

tulasire dekhen, japen saṁkhyā-nām |

bhaktiyoger tattva ke bhuthive ān ||¹⁹

Mahāprabhu did never take his food without devotedly going round Tulasī tulasire pradakṣin Kari' jaladān viṣṇugrhe pradakṣin, namaskār kari' | Savālai bhojane vasilā gaurhari ||²⁰

This kind of service to Tulasī as practised by Śrī Caitanya is followed by the pious minded Vaiṣṇavas even today. The Vaiṣṇavas at present too sprinkle waters on Tulasī before going to take food. Besides, while going out in Nagar-Saṁkīrtan one Vaiṣṇava-saint goes ahead carrying Tulasī on his head. It is the practice of the Vaiṣṇavas to count silently God's name over the Tulasī beads of a rosary.

Relevance of bearing the marks of Tilaka on the body and also of holding the garland of flowers and the wreath of Tulasī and so on-

In the Padmapurāna it is said that the Vaiṣṇavas should hold the marks of Tilaka on the forehead or upon the bridge of the nose. They should also hold the wreath of Tulasī and of flowers by the neck. One who holds the Vaiṣṇava Tilaka on the forehead is a devotee of Viṣṇu or a Vaiṣṇava. By their presence, the world becomes sanctified. Besides, the place where they reside, turns to be Vaikunṭha.

Ye kanṭhalagnatulasīnalīnākṣamālā

Ye vāhumūlaparicihnitaśankhacakrāḥ |

Ye vā lalāṭaphalake lasadūrdapuṅḍrā Ste

Vaiṣṇavā bhuvanamāśu pravitrāyanti ||²¹

This practice of holding the marks is still prevalent with the Vaiṣṇavas. They decorate their forehead and the bridge of their nose with Tilaka-marks. They also even now bear the wreath of Tulasi by their neck. The religious minded Vaiṣṇavas often devotedly go round the temple of Viṣṇu. They also drink caranāmṛta i.e. water in which the foot of Viṣṇu has been washed and also partake ‘Naivedya’ i.e. meals offered to the deity.

In this context, we may refer to the Padmapurāṇa where it is said that the person who is unable to perform any religious rite also attains the heavenly blessings simply by drinking ‘Caranāmṛta.

Na dānam na haviryeshām svādhyāyo na surārcanam |

Te’pi pādodakam pītvā prayānti paramāmgatim ||²²

Besides, till today the devoted Vaiṣṇavas eagerly look at the waving of lights, couch etc. before the God and smell the fragrance of the offered incense and of the flowers. They also even now regularly observe

the Vaiṣṇava-ceremonies like Śrīkrṣṇa's janamāṣṭamī, Rāmnavamī, Jhulanyātrā, Rathayātrā, Dolyātrā and so on.

It is narrated in the Caitanyacaritāmṛta that during the Rathayātrā (car-festival) a large number of followers of Śrī Caitanya came to Puri from navadwip to observe the festival and to meet with Mahāprabhu Śrī Caitanya. In the car-festival Śrī Caitanya with his followers danced and sang the name of God shouting Hari, Hari, Jaya Jagannātha.

Rather-yātrā-dine prabhu sav bhaktalaña |

Rathar-āge nṛtya kare premāviṣṭa haña ||²³

Dhīre dhīre jagannāth Karila gaman |

Āge nṛtya kari cale śacīr nandan ||

Jagannāthe netra diyā save gāy nāce |

Kīrttanīyā saha prabhu cale pāche pāche ||²⁴

While dancing Śrī Caitanya recited various Sanskrit verses as a mark of his intense devotion to God.

nācite nācite Prabhur haila bhāvāntar |

hasta tuli ślok paḍe kari ucca swar ||

one such verse addressed to Śrī Jagannātha is quoted hereunder-

nāham vipro na ca narapatirnāpi vaiśya na śudra |

nāham varṇī na ca gṛhapatirno vanastho yatirvā ||

kintu prodynnikhilaparamā nandapurṇāmṛtābdhe-

rgopībharttuḥ padakamalayordāsādāsānudāsaḥ ||²⁵

i.e. I am not a Brahmin, nor a monarch, neither a vaiśya nor a śudra; I am not a Bahmacārin nor a house holder, nore a vānaprasthin, nor a sanyāsin; I am the slave of the slave of the lotus feet of the Lord of Gopis (Kṛṣṇa), who is the essence of the overflowing ocean of nectar, the eternal bliss.

The dancing of Mahāprabhu Śrī Caitanya in a mood of ecstasy and exuberance of joy in front of the car-festival of Jagannātha has been depicted by Rūpa Goswāmī in his stavamālā. At the end o the description he wishes to see that delightful dancing of Mahāprabhu in front of the car-festival of Śrī Jagannātha again in future.

rathārūḍasyārādadhīpadavi nīlācalapate-

radabhrapremormmmisphuritanāṭanollāsavivaśaḥ |

sahaṣam gāyadbhiḥ parivṛtatanurvaiṣṇavajanaiḥ

sa caitanyaḥ kim me punarapi dṛśoryāsyati padam ||²⁶

Rūpa Goswāmī's hope does not go in vain. People still observe the car-festival of Śrī Jagannātha with pomp and ceremony. Like Mahāprabhu people in large number used to observe the car-festival every year dancing and singing God's name. Besides, the Manipuri devotees recite the Daśāvatāra-stotras of the Gītagovinda by Jayadeva during the car-festival of God Jagannātha.

Contemporary relevance of the few Vaiṣṇava vrtas like Ekādaśī vrata, Cāturmāsya vrata and urjjāvrata-

i) Ekādaśīvrata-

According to Rūpa Goswāmī Harivāsara-sammāna or Ekādaśī vrata is one of the initial marks of devotion. The Ekādaśī tithi is also otherwise called Harivāsara, Mādhava tithi, vaiṣṇava tithi, Harerdina etc. There are twenty-four (24) Ekādaśīs in twelve months and another two (2) Ekādaśīs in Adhimāsa or Puruṣottama māsa. So there are altogether 26 (twenty-six) Ekādaśīs. The names of these Ekādaśīs are as follows-

Name of the month	Name of the fortnight	Name of the Ekādaśī
Vaiśākha	Dark fortnight	varuthinī
Vaiśākha	Bright fortnight	Mohinī

Jyaiṣṭha	Dark fortnight	Aparā
Jyaiṣṭha	Bright fortnight	Nirjjaḷā
Āṣār	Dark fortnight	Yogini
Āṣāra	Bright fortnight	Śayanī
Śrāvaṇa	Dark fortnight	Kāmikā
Śrāvaṇa	Bright fortnight	Pavitrāropanī
Bhādra	Dark fortnight	Annadā
Bhādra	Bright fortnight	Pārśvaikādaśī
Āśvina	Dark fortnight	Indirā
Āśvina	Bright fortnight	Pāpāñkuṣā
Kārttika	Dark fortnight	Ramā or Rambhā
Kārttika	Bright fortnight	Utthāna or prabodhinī
Agrahāyaṇa	Dark fortnight	Uṭpannā
Agrahāyaṇa	Bright fortnight	Mokṣadā
Pauṣa	Dark fortnight	Saphalā

Pauṣa	Bright fortnight	Putradā
Māgha	Dark fortnight	Ṣaṭṭilā
Magha	Bright fortnight	Jayā
Phālguna	Dark fortnight	Vijayā
Phālguna	Bright fortnight	Āmalakī
Caitra	Dark fortnight	Pāpamocanī
Caitra	Bright fortnight	Kāmadā
Adhimāsa or Puruṣottama māsa	Dark fortnight	Kamalā
Adhimāsa or Puruṣottamamāsa	Bright fortnight	Kāmadā

These Ekādaśīs are to be observed by every Vaiṣṇava²⁷ without taking food. In the Brahmavaivartapurāṇa it is said that if any person observes Ekādaśī abstaining from taking food, all his sins will be removed and he will attain piety. Moreover, on that occasion he has the opportunity to remember the name of Śrī Govinda.

Sarvapāpaprāśamanam puṇyamātyantikamtathā |

govindasmāraṇam nṛṇāmekādaśyāmupoṣaṇam ||²⁸

That is why, Mahāprabhu entreated his mother to observe Ekādaśī. It is said in the Caitanyacaritāmṛta that one day Mahāprabhu requested his mother to give him one gift. The mother agreed to give him what he would pray. Mahāprabhu requested his mother to observe Ekādaśī abstaining from food. Thenceforward she began to observe Ekādaśī.

Ekdin māṭṛpade kariyā praṇām |

Prabhu Kahe, mātā more deha ekdān

Mātā vale tāi diva, tumi yā māgive |

Prabhu vale, - ekādaśite anna nā khāive ||

Śaci kahe, nā khāiva, bhalai Kahilā |

Sei haite ekādaśī karate lāgilā ||²⁹

When Mahāprabhu compelled his mother to observe Ekādaśī vrata, it is the pious duty of all mortal human beings to observe compulsorily the Ekādaśī for the sake of attaining piety. Even now the religious minded Vaiṣṇavas observe the Ekādaśī vrata cāturmmāsya vrata-

As stated earlier during Mahāprabhu's stay at Nīlāchal many of his followers from Navadwip went there to meet with him end to participate in the car-festival of Śrī Jagannātha. After the car-festival they remained

there at Nīlāchal for another four months for observing the ‘Cāturmmāsya-vrata’ along with Mahāprabhu. According to the Śāstric injunction this Caturmmāsya vrata is to be performed right from the bright Dvādaśī tithi of the month of Āṣāra to bright Dvādasī tithi of the month of Kārttika or according to another view the Cāturmmāsya Vrata is to be performed from the day of the full moon of Āṣāra to the day of the full moon of the Kārttika. These four months are to be observed compulsorily by every vaiṣṇava sincerely otherwise he will incur sin. It is said in the ‘Hari-Bhakti-Bilāsa’ if any person observes cāturmmāsya-Vrata, his devotion to Kṛṣṇa will be increased.

Ityāśvāsya prabhorgre gṛhṇīyānniyamam vratī |

cāturmmāseṣu karttavyam Kṛṣṇabhakti vivṛddhaye ||³⁰

On the other hand, if any person does not observe the Cāturmmāsya vrata, he appears, as if, dead though breathing.

Yo Vinā niyamam marttyo vratam vā japyameva vā |

Cāturmmāsyam nayemūrkhō jīvannapi mṛṇm hito saḥ ||³¹

The injunctions and prohibitions of this cāturmmāsya vrata are stated in the following verse of the Skandapurāna; (quoted in the Śrīharivāsara- vrata-Kathā, p.100)-

Śrāvaṇe varjjayecchākam dadhi bhādrapade tathā |

Dugdhamāśvayeji māsi, Kārttike cāmiṣam tyajet ||³²

i.e. vegetable food is prohibited in Śrāvana, curd in bhādrapada, milk in Āśvina while non-vegetarian food is prohibited in Kārttika. In other words, one should not eat vegetables in Śrāvana, curd in Bhādra, milk in Āśvina and non-vegetarian food in Kārttika. The person who is habitually non-vegetarian to him leguminous seeds of pulse (popularly called Māṣ-Kalāi) are taken to be non-vegetarian food and, as such, it is prohibited for a devotee of Viṣṇu in the month of Kārttika.

But now-a-days, the rigidity of the injunction and restriction of Caturmmāsya vrata is slackned.

Even now the Cāturmmāsya vrata is observed by the devoted men particularly by the people belonging to Vaiṣṇava sect.

Ūrjjāvraṭa or Dāmodara vrata

The Ūrjjāvraṭa or Dāmodara-vrata is to be observed in the month of Kārttika i.e. at the last month of the cāturmmāsya vrata. The Dāmodara-vrata is also known by the names Ūrjjāvraṭa, Kārttika-vrata, Niyama-māsa etc. The Ūrjjā vrata is one of the 64 marks of devotion (Bhaktiyāṅga) as advocated by Rūpa Goswāmī in his Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu. The Kārttika-

vrata has to be performed compulsorily by a pious man who is not in a position to observe the cāturmnāsyā-vrata of course, this Niyama-māsa is to be observed by the man devoted to Viṣṇu-faith even though he has already performed –the paraphernalia of the Cāturmmāsyā Vrata.

The month of Kārttika is the most holy month to the Vaiṣṇava since this month is favourite to Keśava (Kṛṣṇa). In this month one should abstain from taking non-vegetarian food. This Karttika vṛata is to be observed by the men devoted to Vaiṣṇava faith by singing the name of God and listening the noble episodes of God. On that occasion one should enkindle the sky-lamp (Ākāś-pradīp).

Dāmodarāya nabhasi tulāyām lolayā saha |

Pradīpunte prayacchāmi namo' nantāya vedhase ||³³

i.e. O Providence, I enkindle this sky-lamp for you seeking your blessings.

However, even now people belonging to the Vaiṣṇava-sect follow this practice. They observe the Niyamamāsa or Ūrjjāvṛata singing the name of God. On that occasion they abstain from taking non-vegetable food like meat or fish. They remain totally vegetarian. In the evening they enkindle sky lamp (i.e. Ākāśa-pradīpa) in the open space of the

compound. This indicates the contemporary relevance of the Dāmodara Vrata or Ūrjjā-vrata of the Vaiṣṇavism.

The Phālgunī Purnimā is also a very holy tithi (lunar day) to devout Vaiṣṇavas since on that auspicious lunar day Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was born at Navadvīp in 1486 A.D. Incidentally it is the occasion for Dolotsava. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu used to celebrate the Dolotsava at Nīlāchal along with his followers by singing Kīrtan song. So even now people irrespective of caste and creed sing Kīrtan song for Aṣṭaprahara i.e. whole day and night continuously. Sometimes, on that occasion the devoted persons sing Kīrtan for 56 (fifty six) prahars i.e. seven days at a stretch. This proves the contemporary relevance of Caitanyaism.

At present the people worship Rādhā-kṛṣṇa in the temple and bow down before them with devotion. It has been in Ākṣhadās observed that the devout vaiṣṇavas worship the image of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the embodiment of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa alone or with his follower Nityānanda and sing glorifying the God by chanting their names.

Jay jay nityānanda jay Gaurahari |

Śrī Rādhār prāṇadhan Govinda murāri ||

Before taking Mahāprasād the devotees pronounce the victory of their names as-

‘bala bala nityānanda mahāprabhu ki jay’ |

It is also noticed that the devotees pronounce repeatedly-

‘Phir vala bhāi kānāi Balai

Gaur Gaur Gaur.’

And at the end of taking Mahāprasād the elderly Vaiṣṇava-saint pronounces the following words-

Jay jay bhojan samāpti-prīti

Ānande bal hari bal.’

On the basis of the above discussion it may be said that Caitanya’s Gauḍiya is much relevant with regard to the social and religious life of the people at large event today perhaps it may not be wrong to say that Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism will continue for the generation to generation to come.