

Sādhu Sādhu!
A Life of Bābā Śrī Tinkaḍi
Gosvāmī

Binode Bihari Dasa Bābājī

Translated from Bengali with an introduction
by
Neal Delmonico, PhD

Recollections of Bābā by Joseph Knapp
and
Mark Tinghino

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Publisher's Foreward

It is with great happiness and joy that we are able to offer another wonderful book to the public, nicely translated by Dr. Delmonico. And being the life of our most blessed Gurudev it is of special significance and blessing not only for students of our particular rasik path but also for all people of the world. Reading about the lives of saints is important in many spiritual and religious traditions. It helps us to open our eyes, minds and hearts to new possibilities. As we read and think about the saints, we become inspired spiritually, imbibing the grace of their attainment through this process of loving remembrance. In reading about their lives we also find instruction and consolation on the path. How did they attain the goal? What did they go through? What did they sacrifice on the way? With what advice do they leave us?

The great Vaishnav saint presented here represents one of the last of his kind, perhaps the last of his era, for, as anyone can see, modernity is such that it cannot now hardly be escaped. With the influx of so much wealth into the country of India and the resultant modernization of life there, it becomes harder and harder for the present generation of practitioner to devote their minds, bodies and souls, with diligence and concentration, to the full time traditional path.

The distractions have increased. More and more wealthy people, wanting entrance into heaven or an even more affluent life while here on earth, give more and more wealth to the *sādhus* and saints in the hope of accruing their blessings. It is a miracle that they are left with any sanity at all. The noise, the pollution, the hustle and bustle and finally, yes, the competition. With the stakes higher now we see a lot of competition for students—the equation being that more students equal more power and wealth and therefore more prestige. It has even reached the point that

some so-called holy people, self-proclaimed gurus and god-men, however well established they may be, now outright steal (or try to), *ashrams* (monasteries), money, followers, land, and so forth from others.

The above might sound astounding to many who read this: what? In the holy land of India!? How can this happen there? The answer, however distasteful, is that it has been happening there for hundreds of years—yet with the increased level of audacity nowadays, it is unmistakable. And yet many people are still fooled—they are unwilling or unable to distinguish a real holy person from a fraud, or, harder still, from a half-fraud. How can one see the true qualities of a person or what the true motivations are for what they do? Are they self-proclaimed and therefore self-involved, or are they selflessly serving according to the orders of the guru? Do they humbly follow the path set forth by the acts and instructions of the guru? Or have they become swept up by the business-like modernity, which more like an illness than the needed medicine?

With the dynamic increase of land prices that has scourged the whole world, the stakes get higher and greed comes into play. No doubt it is a sad situation, but we are on the earth living in a time that is not nurturing to any form of life including the human life! There has never been a time on earth, at least in recorded history, free of strife, free of greed, free of dishonesty perpetrated on others. Since this is so and there does not seem to be much we can do about it, perhaps we should look instead into our own psyches, our own characters, and try to work on ourselves and become as much as we are able, living examples of wisdom, truth, devotion, compassion, joy and loving-kindness. That is the subject of this book!

So let us dive deep into stories of the lives of the saints and especially into the life of this particular saint with whom some people in our midst have lived and whom they have served personally. This is a translation of a collection of biographical details from the life of Śrīmān Tin Kuḍi Gosvāmī by only one of his disciples, Śrī Binod Bihari Das Bābā. Therefore, we have added some 'extras' in the form of our own reminiscences of times we spent in the presence of our blessed Gurudev for you to enjoy. Perhaps, in addition, you will find in these accounts the seed of something very holy, profound, and liberating. May that indescribable seed take root in your hearts, where, it is our hope, it will grow, flower and eventually produce fruit, filling your lives with the delightful sweetness of divine love.

*gurur brahmā gurur viṣṇur gurur devo maheśvaraḥ
gurur sāksāt parabrahma tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ*

Jagadish Das
June 20, 2007
Gokula Dhāma,
Kirksville, Missouri

Part I

Prabhupāda's Life Story

Early Life

Jaya Śrī Gurudeva!

Victory to the Blessed Guru!

Nearly thirty years ago¹ at a place named Adibadri in Vraja a practitioner (*sādhaka*) was sitting, leaning against the wall of a small room near a temple. He had matted hair and his body was well-shaped. While he was submerging his mind in thinking of *yugala-kīśora* (the youthful couple, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa) it seemed as if he sometimes began to get drowsy. Suddenly, his drowsiness broke and he began to chastise himself for it. One could not tell how late it was. There was no way of telling what time it was. It seemed to be after midnight. The practitioner with shuffling steps went out of the room. Then observing the positions of the stars in the clear sky, he tried to determine the time. He decided to take his bath and then sit down again for private worship (*bhajana*). In front of him was dense forest. As soon as the sadhak took hold of a water pot and stepped forward, he noticed two blazing eyes splitting the dark night in front of him. They were just like two bright stars! It was probably some ferocious forrest animal. The animal was not standing very far away. The practitioner fixed his gaze on the animal and tried to determine what kind of animal it was. In that condition, the practitioner was unable to determine what it was and remained standing there, unsure of what to do. Thinking that valuable time was being wasted, the practitioner became restless. Then, in order to scare the animal, he shook his pot and made a sound like “hūsh hūsh,” The creature, not being even slightly frightened, remained standing just as it was before. After spending sometime in this impasee, the animal jumped across in front

¹The book was written in 1987.

of the practitioner and quickly disappeared into the forest. At that moment he saw stripes on the body of the animal. The practitioner realized then that it had been a tiger!

Who was that practitioner whom a ferocious tiger that was standing just in front of him gave up as food and went away? Who was that practitioner who though seeing death in the form of a hungry tiger standing before him did not feel any fear whatsoever. That practitioner had attained such a treasure that even a ferocious tiger forgot his ferociousness. He had attained such a state of fearlessness that even when confronted with a ferocious tiger he was unperturbed.

He was known in Vraja and among those born in Vraja, who thought of him as one of their very own, as Tin Kaḍi Baba or Mauni Baba.

There is a village named Manoharpur in the Ghāṭāl Mahakumār part of the district of Medinipur in West Bengal. Its qualities are just like its name—mind-enchanting. Truly, the beauty of that village steals everyone's hearts. Nature adorned that village in an expert way with many kinds of trees, flowers, and ponds. Therefore, perhaps, the village was named Manoharpur.

Several generations of people in the lineage of Mother Jāhnavā Ṭhākurāṇī, the non-different power of Nityananda Prabhu, spent their lives in this village. Śrī Śrī 108 Prabhupāda Tinkaḍi Goswami was born in that village. His father's name was Harimohan Goswami and his mother's name was Suradhuni Devi.

It was the full moon day of Māgha in Bengali year 1313 [1907 c.e.]. In all directions *saṅkīrtana* of the holy names and other auspicious rites were being performed. The house of Harimohan Goswami was also filled with the joy of *saṅkīrtana* of the holy names. In the house were sacred images named Gaura and Balarāma that were nearly five hundred years old. In the courtyard of the temple the *saṅkīrtana* of the names of Hari was in progress. Many Vaiṣṇavas too made auspicious appearances at the house of Harimohan Goswami. On such an auspicious day, at an auspicious time, a male child was born, lighting up the lap of Suradhuni Devi, wife of Harimohan Goswami. Harimohan Goswami's joy knew no bounds. With great joy he began to serve the Vaiṣṇavas.

That was Suradhuni Devi's eighth child. Before him six sons and one daughter had died. In the birth house the mid-wife cut the child's umbilical cord and took him on her lap. Then she said: "this son is mine." Suradhuni Devi gave the mid-wife three cowries (*tin kaḍi*) and

bought her son. Therefore, the son became hers and the son's name became Tinkaḍi.

Harimohan Gosvami named his son Kiśorī-kiśorānanda. He was a very beautiful baby. Gradually, little-by-little, he learned to walk. He was very mischievous. At the slightest inattentiveness of his mother the child scattered and broke pots and lamps and drove his mother to distraction. From time to time his mother became upset at the misbehavior of her child and would tie him up. All of the neighbors in the area loved that child. With or without cause the neighboring mothers would come and caress the child.

In this way five years passed. By the rule of fate, suddenly, one day darkness descended on the house of Harimohan Goswami. After only a few days of illness Suradhuni Devi passed away. At the loss of his wife Harimohan Gosvami was deeply troubled. Above all, the biggest problem was who will now take care of his child. Many recommended to the Gosvami that he marry a second time, but he was not at all in agreement with the idea of marrying a second time. He owned a little bit of land, but with that it was not possible to maintain his household. From time to time he had to visit the households of his disciples. From what little he received as gifts from them he ran his household. In this situation who would take care of his child?

Thereupon, Harimohan Goswami began to worry about finding some way to solve the problem. One of his distant cousins was extremely affectionate towards the Goswami's son. Seeing the Goswami so worried she said to him: "Why are you worrying? I will take care of your child. Give your child over to me. From today you should think that this child is mine not yours." Hearing these words, Goswami became completely free from worry. He said: "You've done a good thing, sister. You have saved me; from today this child is yours!" From that time on the Dhāi Mā (wet nurse) began to raise Tinkaḍi.

That child only five years of age was the very life of Dhāi Mā. Her house was four or five miles away from Manoharpur in a town called Rāñcak. In order to take care of the lad Tinkaḍi, she had to move to Manoharpur. Harimohan Goswami was generally visiting his disciples' houses. After ten days, after fifteen days and sometimes after a month he would return to the house. Goswamiji handed the care of his son to Dhāi Mā and was able to go back and forth to and from his disciples' houses without worry.

The boy was very capricious. If he wasn't watched every minute he would disappear somewhere. When Dhāi Mā did not see the boy, she became agitated and searched for him. After much searching, she would catch him and bring him back. She always and in all places had to watch him, otherwise where this mischievous boy was and what he was doing was difficult to keep track of. For Dhāi Mā it was an extraordinary responsibility. If one did not give him whatever he wanted whenever he wanted it he would cry, roll around in the dirt on the ground, and make a big fuss. It was a good deal of trouble for Dhāi Mā. In this way, through her care and his father's affection the boy Tinkaḍi was raised.

In time, chalk was placed in his hand for his education, and he was enrolled in school. But it was a great problem sending him to school for he did not at all want to go to school. How much caressing and begging was necessary to send Tinkaḍi to school. In the evening Dhāi Mā would sit and teach the boy. The boy learned to read very quickly, but he still did not want to study at all. With much caressing Dhāi Mā read to him repeatedly many kinds of stories and made him practice reading. How many times after sitting down to study did he say "I'm hungry! I'm tired!" and so forth. In this way the education of the boy Tinkaḍi progressed.

As much as his age increased, the boy's capriciousness also increased. All the time it was only play and more play. If he even heard the word "study" it was as if the sky had broken and fallen on his head. Getting him to study at school was a huge problem. Just before it was time to go to school the boy would disappear. His foster mother becoming anxious would search for him at this house and that house and bring him back. After that, so much caressing and begging was required to get him to go to school. Some days she wasn't able to find Tinkaḍi at all. After the time for school had passed he would show up. One day just before it was time to go to school the boy disappeared. Dhāi Mā after much searching returned to the house without finding him. At that moment she happened to glance up at a tree and saw that Tinkaḍi had climbed the tree and was sitting there. After a great deal of Dhāi Mā's begging he felt sorry for her and came down from the tree. Another day she was again unable to find Tinkaḍi when it was time to go to school. After that Dhāi Mā went to take care of some work in the house and found him hiding under the bed.

In this way Tinkaḍi gradually became older. After a while the time for his brahminical initiation (*upanayana*) arrived. When Tinkaḍi was

about the age of nine, Harimohan Goswami performed the sacrament of *brāhmaṇa* initiation and gave him [Vaiṣṇava] mantra initiation (*dīkṣā*) as well. When the day of the initiation arrived there occurred an amazing transformation in Tinkāḍi. When his head had been shaved and he had put on the saffron cloth, an amazing, profound state of feeling was noticeable in him. Nearly all of the Vaiṣṇavas who had come inferred that this boy is not an ordinary boy. Through him many blessings will come to the world. They all gave him their blessings from the core of their heart. Saying to Dhāimā: “[Please give] alms, Mother!” he accepted his first alms from her.

After his initiation Tinkāḍi’s capriciousness for the most part diminished. Every day in the morning he wanted to read one chapter of the *Gītā*. It was as if the *Gītā* was his life. When it was time to go to school he would talk a copy of the *Gītā* with him. At school when it was time to practice reading he would read the *Gītā* instead of the other books. At the time he showed a special attraction for *saṅkīrtana* of the holy names, too. Everyday he wanted to perform *kīrtana* in the evening in front of the Gaura and Balarama images established in his house. When *kīrtana* was being performed, from time to time special emotional states were seen in the boy Tinkāḍi.

Gradually Tinkāḍi left boyhood behind and entered his teenage years. In his teenage years, his body developed in an amazing way. His eyes became inclined, his chest defined, and a special beauty appeared on all of his limbs with the fresh arrival of youth. His speaking expressions and ability to speak were also amazing. He used to please everyone with his used of very beautiful expressions. During this period since he had become so competent in learning his education was completed.

His father Harimohan Goswami became concerned about his son’s future. They owned a little bit of land, but it was not enough to support a family on. Therefore the Goswami thought that if he introduced his son among some of his disciples, in the future he would be able to support himself in the profession of teaching. Thinking in this way, he began to take his son with him to the houses of his disciples. Just taking him to the houses of disciples was not enough. He also needed to have some knowledge of scripture. If one just becomes a guru it will not work. Therefore, Harimohan Goswami began to teach his son the *Bhāgavata*, the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, the *Caitanya-bhāgavata* and so forth. His son had no enthusiasm for study in general, but for the study of all those texts on *bhakti* he was extremely enthusiastic. Gradually, following

the system the family gurus, he began to have a few disciples. When he was at home Prabhupāda Tinkaḍi Goswami would recite every day the *Bhāgavata*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and other *bhakti* texts in front of the sacred images Śrī Gaura and Balarāma. From time to time he would go with his father and sometimes alone to the houses of disciples.

Gradually, Prabhupāda Tinkaḍi Goswami turned into a young man. His father Harimohan Goswami then began to worry about his son's marriage. He received information about a young lady with all the right qualities. In a village near Manoharpur named Khāñjāpur lived Gopīnāth Goswami. He had a seven year old daughter named Śītalā Sundarī. Her nature and her figure were very beautiful. Her father, too, had begun to worry about finding his daughter a good match. Harimohan Goswami one day made the proposal to Gopīnāth Goswami. Gopīnāth Goswami could not control his joy. He, too, in his mind had nourished the wish to offer his daughter to Tinkaḍi Goswami. He joyfully accepted the proposal of Harimohan Goswami. On an auspicious day, in an auspicious hour, the marriage of Prabhupāda Tinkaḍi Goswami with Śītalā Sundarī, the daughter of Gopīnāth Goswami of Khāñjāpur, was performed. Gopīnāth Goswami with tears in his eyes sent his daughter to the house of her father-in-law.

In the village of Manoharpur at the house of Harimohan Goswami, the new bride's arrival was auspicious. Everyone's joy knew no limits. Seeing the young, capricious girl-bride Harimohan Goswami was lost in joy. In this way, in the midst of so much joy a year passed. Suddenly, by the laws of fate, on to this golden household fell the shadow of great sadness. Prabhupāda's father, after only a few days of illness, left his perishable body and set out for the eternal sport. Prabhupāda was then only sixteen years of age. Without his father, without his mother, Prabhupāda's heart was stricken with sadness. He felt himself completely helpless. All his neighbors began to console him. Gradually, Prabhupāda regained his mental strength and began to take care of the responsibilities of the household. In this way, a few years passed in the midst of a mental state burdened with sadness.

Though indeed Prabhupāda Tinkaḍi Goswami began to pass his married life in this way, still day after day it began to seem as if his mind had disappeared somewhere in thoughts of the higher truths. Prabhupāda had heard when he was a child "Churning curds in the early morning makes the butter come out good. Worship of Kṛṣṇa when one is young brings success when one grows old." This saying began to disturb his

mind again and again. The most valuable time of his life was passing by. If worship of Kṛṣṇa does not happen now, when will it? As more days go, by bondage to worldly life will increase. If someone waits, sitting on the shore of the sea thinking: “when the waves of the sea calm down I will take my bath,” one is not likely to ever get his bath. In the same way, if someone waits thinking: “when the waves of the troubles of worldly life become calm I will worship Kṛṣṇa,” then one’s worship will not likely ever happen. In such thoughts joys of worldly life began lessen for Prabhupāda and his passion for worship began to increase.

At that time Prabhupāda was very fashionable. He always wore dhotis and kurtas of the finest cotton. He never wore ordinary or soiled clothes. He also used to smoke then. In order to smoke he used to use a very beautiful hookah and along with it the finest tobacco from Vishnupur. When he had to go somewhere he would not forget to take his hookah and the Vishnupur tobacco with him. When going to a disciple’s house he used to take a *brāhmaṇa* cook with him. When going from one village to another his disciples used to take Prabhupāda in a palanquin.

After passing a few years in this manner a son was born lighting up the lap of his wife Śītālā Sundarī. The birth of a son is a matter for Prabhupāda’s joy. But in his heart there was no joy. It was as if the joy had disappeared somewhere. He began to think that the most valuable time of his life was passing and that his bondage to worldly life was increasing day by day. When will I offer my body, mind, and life-breath to the lotus feet of Śrī Govinda and wholeheartedly do private worship (*bhajana*)? This kind of thought began to lessen his joy in worldly life. From time to time he began to visit Navadvīpa and Nīlācala.

At that time there was an uncontrollable desire in his heart. He thought: “I have made many disciples, but if I am to explain scripture a little knowledge of Sanskrit is necessary. Thinking in this way, he began for some time to study with some *paṇḍita* in Navadvīpa. But thinking about his household life and about the Lord created interferences in his study. His studying never happened again. He returned to Manoharpur. On account of responsibilities, he remained in household life, but his mind again and again ran away to Vṛndāvana. It was as if some invisible power was beckoning him. Because of the uncontrollable force of his mind one day, without telling anyone, he actually started out for Vṛndāvana.

After reaching Vṛndāvana his joy knew no limits when he saw the places where Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s sports occurred. After visiting those places he

practically forgot all about his home and determining that he wanted to live permanently in Vraja, he began to pray to the feet of compassionate Śrī Rādhārāṇī: “O Compassionate Kīśorī, don’t throw me back into the dark well of worldly life. Mistress, don’t allow me to go from Vraja to any other place.” While praying in this way he arrived at Mount Govardhana. There he heard from people that at Govindakuṇḍa lived a perfected great-soul (*siddha-mahātmā*). His name was Śrī Śrī 108 Manohara Dās Bābājī Mahārāj. Prabhupāda with great excitement and with very little delay went running to Govindakuṇḍa wishing to see the perfected *bābā*.

The perfected *bābā* when he saw Prabhupāda offered him a full eight-limbed, stick-like prostration. Prabhupāda was completely unprepared for that and objected. The perfected *bābā* said: “Why not? You are a descendant of the great teachers (*ācārya*). You are a world-guru. If I should not offer obeisance to you, who should I offer it to?” After that the perfected *bābā* with great respect offered him a seat and made arrangements for his stay. One day Prabhupāda asked him: “Mahārāja, what must one do to attain *bhakti*?” The perfected *bābā* replied with astonishment: “What kind of question is that? *Bhakti* is one of your household items and you are asking: how does one get *bhakti*?” After that after spending a few days in many question and answer discussions of worship (*bhajana*), Prabhupāda informed the *bābā* of his wish not to return to his house any more. In response, the perfected *bābā* said: “What kind of talk is that? Haven’t you nourished the desire to become a big scholar?” At this statement of the *bābā*, Prabhupāda was particularly surprised and he began to wonder how the perfected *bābā* knew his inner desires. Because of that incident his faith in the perfected *bābā* became even more strong. Then the perfected *bābā* gave Prabhupāda an order: “Return to your house. This is not your time. You still have much work to do yet. Through you many things beneficial to the world will come to pass. When the time is right your desire to live in Vṛndāvana will be fulfilled.” Prabhupāda with a pained heart remained silent for a little while and then said: “But I have no money for a ticket. How will I go?” The perfected *bābā* said: “Don’t worry. You go to Vṛndāvana. Ticket money has been sent from home for you there.” Prabhupāda had no other recourse; he left Govindakuṇḍa at the order of the perfected *bābā* and went to the house of relative he knew in Vṛndāvana. There he heard that indeed a money order had arrived from home for his return trip. Prabhupāda took the money and started towards home.

Though Prabhupāda had returned to his house, his detachment from household life began gradually to increase. He had one son whom he named Vṛndāvana[candra]. When the child was only three months old, Prabhupāda's wife Śītalā Sundarī left behind her body and went to the next world, after only a few days of illness. At this, Prabhupāda lost his faith in worldly life. Worldly life for him began to feel like a prison of misery. Here there is nothing called happiness, only the essence of misery. Becoming deluded by the illusion of this false worldly life a human being neglectfully loses such a rare human birth. Seeing the impermanence of this kind of worldly existence his mind became even more indifferent towards it. However that may be, now his major worry was: who will take care of this nursing child? His neighbors and friends all encouraged Prabhupāda to marry a second time. He made it known that he was deeply against that proposal. Even so his childhood friend Yāminī Kumāra Banerjee Mahāśaya encouraged him with special vigor. He said: "Goswami, if you do not marry now who will take care of this poor motherless child? Besides that, you yourself are still young. If there is no wife in the house, who will look after you?" Prabhupāda was then twenty-eight years old. He was not at all in agreement with this proposal, but he was especially worried about his child. Then Prabhupāda's own *dhāimā* (wet nurse) said to him: "You do not have to worry about this child. In the same way that I raised you, I will raise this son of yours." When Dhāimā said this Prabhupāda became free from worry.

Part II

Prabhupāda's Sweet Nature

Part III

Prabhupāda's Sūcaka Kīrtanas

