

BOOK REVIEW

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Visnupriya - The Forgotten Wife of Sri Gauranga

Sisir Kumar Sengupta, Vishnupriya, a life sketch of sri Sri Vishnupriya in Bengali verse, Nabarun Publishers, Calcutta, 1399 Bengali Era, pp. 94, Rs. 25.



Srimati Vishnupriya, the second wife of Gauranga Mahaprabhu of Bengal, in our worldly estimate, led a lonely life after the sannyas of her husband. Since then the followers of Mahaprabhu have been casually remembering Vishnupriya – to them Lord Gauranga is the acme of divine ecstasy of Brajabhumi. The Vaisnavas of Bengal, in fact, consider Gauranga Mahaprabhu as Krishna possessing the essence of Radhaji – the Radhabhavadyuti. Naturally, in this philosophical framework, Vishnupriyaji sinks into oblivion. In other words, she has been sacrificed for the spiritual welfare of the people at the altar of Gaurangaji. In Bengal, however, some devotees of Gauranga in the second half of the 16th century started the worship of Gaur-Vishnupriya as an ideal couple. Even today, Gaur-Vishnupriya sampradaya, perhaps ignoring Gauranga the sanyasi, worship the eternal couple with all divinity.

Sisir Kumar Sengupta in his present versified book has composed a life sketch of Vishnupriya in Bengali in seven sections indicating the advent of both Gauranga and Vishnupriya as well as their marriage, conjugal life, separation and lastly sublimation. In his preface in prose or gaurchandrika Sengupta has give a graphic account of the lifetime of both Gauranga and Vishnupriya. Following it, we know that Gaurangaji was born in 1486 A.D. (27 February), became a sanyasi in 1510 A.D. when he was only 24 years old. Gaurangaji left the world in 1536 A.D. Vishnupriyaji, on the other hand, was born in 1496 A.D. and when she died, she was 65 years old. Sengupta claims that Vishnupriyaji was the first disciple of Gauranga Mahaprabhu.

In versifying the day to day life of Vishnupriya the poet sometimes emphasizes the Vaisnava philosophy. For instance, in a piece number 37 Sengupta wants Vishnupriyaji to ask Gauranga for lessons in Grammar which was his academic forte. In reply, Gauranga promises to teach Vishnupriya Bhava like dasya, sakhya, etc. It seems that Sengupta wants Vishnupriya to assert her rights as a wife. At the same time, he hears sad tune of separation—separation of a wife from husband. But the poet, though convinced of the separation, cannot accept the fact that Vishnupriya, after the sanyas of her husband, had to spend a remorseful life of a husband-forsaken wife. Sengupta writes: "Listen Sri Gauranga/Leave aside spiritual stance/Go back to Nabadwipdham/Be seated by the side of your wife/And regain normal life/devoid of tears of sad preacher". Gauranga Mahaprabhu, historically speaking used to send Vishnupriyaji sarees from Neelachal Puri, which according to the Poet, were 'Passionwoven'. To the devotees of Gaur-Vishnupriya, they are ever present in Nabadwipdham. In order to appreciate the spiritual significance of this couple, one should not fall back upon the Vedas, as Gauranga-Vishnupriya lies beyond the pale of the Vedas, the idea is Vedbidhiagochar. Sengupta writes – as Vrindabandham is not comprehensible without Srikrishna, so is Nabadwipdham without Gauranga. The Gaur-Vishnupriya sampradaya sings even today: Hail to Gauranga/the son of Sachi and idol of Vishnupriya/the healer and

saviour of Nadia.

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