

The Speeches of Sri SriGuruchand Thakur

Translated by Dr Asit Biswas

(Based on the recollection of Acharya Mahananda Halder, the author of *Sri Sri Guruchand Charit*, who narrated these to his grandson, Sri Sukriti Sunder Halder, who noted them down and gave a copy of the written manuscript in Bengali to the present translator)

Speech Delivered at Duttadanga in 1881

Respected eminent personalities andesteemeddelegates present in this conference.

It's my humble appeal to all, please listen attentively, for a while, to what I say. This conference resembles the great conference in the heavenly court of Lord Indra; it brings a feeling of elation. My selection as the President of this conference, I know, is the result of my father's bliss. He was very generous to appear in the society of the wretched community. He nourished, in his heart,a hope to uplift the community to a great standard. But Lord Harichand departed even before his wishes got fulfilled. Just before his final departure he called me and eagerly informed me of all the missionary projects he wanted to accomplish. So, I'm determined, as long as I live, I'll be working in order to complete all his incomplete projects. I thank you all for selecting me as thePresident of this conference. The core of my message contains nothing of my own, rather it's all about my father's mission. In this conference I want to recall the history of the Namasudra community. To the receptive ears, the account of one's forefathers is quite a sacred one; so, please listen to the history of our forefathers. As found in the scriptures, it's incomparably a holy task to listen to the glorious deeds of one's own preceding generations. It removes all the sins whether it's a murder of a Brahmin or of other people. You know the story of Janmejy who committed the sin by killing a Brahmin in his snake-yajna. The feeling of sin frightened him and his heart began palpitating; and indecisiveness kept on haunting him. Then he invited all the *munis*of his kingdom to his royal court and prayed for a remedy for washing off his sins. All the *munis* prescribed him to listen to the exploits of his forefathers. Thereafter Janmejy could get rid of his sins by listening to what had happened in his royal clan. The narration of the sacred accounts brought a soothing feeling to his singed heart and washed off his sin of killing a Brahmin.

So, you, all the delegates, please pay attention and listen to the history of the Namasudra community. You'll achieve *punya* that will bring you strength and the supreme jewels day after day. Let me narrate in this conference, when they became Namasudra, and what they had been earlier. Their culture and habits all resemble the Brahmins'; but they have no sacred thread round their neck. All of them are cultivators and it's never a matter of shame; the Aryan people also used to do the same in the ancient age. The Namasudras are open-minded ones devoid of any cunning tricks or ostentations. Their houses bear no mark of luxury. We lead a hazard-free domestic life and even a meagre amount satisfies us. In the course of our simple life, we keep ourselves aloof from any kind of luxury. We are a generous and sinless community; pious mood always characterizes us. All the families worship gods. These simple-minded people unhesitatingly donate goods to the people, be it beggars or guests. Why such simple-minded people are all wretched— let me explain it in this conference. In the atmosphere of this pure belief there was born Sri Harichand Gosain, the merciful incarnate. Keeping the image of my father's holy feet in my heart I want to narrate, in short, what history says. It is a story of utter sorrow that causes a stinging pain in my heart, it's a picture that pierces through my heart. Where is the origin and development of this vast universe? Who created it and in what rules? How does the power in shape of consciousness remain in the inanimate masses? What is the relationship between the Creator and His creation and how does it remain conscious? Who speaks from the body mass, whose departure leaves the inanimate corpse lying in dust? In life or in death, at every nocturnal or diurnal moments which thread tether the life of the creatures? In this world, since the dawn of life, these thoughts have ever engulfed the human race. In order to grasp the uncapturable, the human race has relied on profound thoughts every day, every moment. Desire for the supreme victory has made man undergo religious practices in ages even by decaying their human body. He has convinced his unending mind-power and yoked it with the universal power to win the uncapturable by severing the earthly ties of the body. Thus, seizing the power of consciousness his life got blessed. Where the stagnant water of a well is stored in a dam, it weeps; the water of the vast sea appeals to it to join. In case the dam gets broken, the stagnant water of the well rushes towards the vast sea and gets united with it. In the course of its union whatever is to be revealed gets revealed before it gets merged with the sea. Who knows what happens when it gets merged with the sea? But the well water gives up its own bodily shape and its own identity passes into the sphere of oblivion. In the course of reaching the goal of human beings whatever blooms in their heart may be expressed but with a limit. Keeping it stored in the memory one interprets it and the people gather to hear it. These great

sayings exist in the chapter of knowledge and the virtuous people explore it and discover its virtues. The endless gets a limit, the end and the unending gets united and this theory is interpreted with consciousness. When the unbound gets tied up, the origin is found defective, and so, there lies unending doubts. The domestic creatures, as they exist with a limit, become neuter, and so, there grows good and evil, happiness and sorrows. The Supreme power as the guardian of the universe, with weighing scales in hand, keeps always a strict vigil. If one end of the rod of the scale gets down and inequality is detected thereby, He breaks the inequality. In the weighing scales of the world, I often notice, inequality again and again launches its attack. Keeping the earth on His chest He rectifies any deviation, in order to provide the earth with equality anew. Once upon a time, the knowledge incarnate was born in a royal family in the Northern part of India. He was known by the name Buddha and he contributed to the mission of welfare of man. The division and discrimination got vanished and the people got united. To receive a new theory the earth was transformed into a heaven and the great slogan for a universal power was raised. He called the people and explained birth, death, sorrows and sufferings to them. The people gathered strength in their heart and even in the triangular pains they came to know that non-violence is the supreme truth. There were no jealousy, no animosity, and the people felt that it was one nation, one country and the Buddhists rushed out in groups for religious victory. India was conquered and then they went to greater India; all the hesitations in human mind got vanished. Whether in art or literature, religion or theory, there bloomed a flower of eternal beauty.

As days passed by gradually, some tricks of nature made the people forget all and commit a blunder. In the name of the Brahministic religion they forcefully crushed down the Buddhist religion in this holy land of India. The larger was the group, the more serious was the tyranny. Gradually, the very name of the Buddha was banished. Those who loved the religion suffered so much. At last, for sake of life they took refuge in jungles. The weaker people took shelter at the foot of the royal power and thereby they got indomitable. The throne was occupied by a Hindu king and nowhere there was a Buddhist; the greater ones sacrificed their heads for sake of religion. All their descendants living afar were following some rituals secretly. The rich and the mighty branded them as an impious race, only in order to denounce them.

The wheel of time rolled back; Buddhism was incorporated into Hinduism. As found in the history of India, in Bengal as well as in other provinces there are found the Buddhists in the shape of Hindus. So, I perceive everywhere, those who are called untouchable seldom

know all the rituals of Hinduism. Some Hindus are Buddhists— this practice is noticed in the whole country and the Buddhists get perplexed and cannot but accept it. But the people with sincerity and good reason refused to save life at the cost of religion. For the sake of religion, they went afar and suffered much torture and led a mean jungle-life for sake of religion. We have been born in the race of these religious heroes and the wheel of time has made us mean.

Long time passed by and the people suffered extreme pains. Thereafter, this family became the follower of Lord Hari. They shed tears for long ages and their weeping voice cried out, where are you, o you merciful? We can no longer bear the pain of our sorrows; please remove it, O you saviour. The weep of the sorrowful made Hari share the pain and so, He appeared in the family of the sorrowful.

Yashobanta was a great sadhu blessed with numerous virtues. The Lord was born in his family. He was named Hari. He trod on the paths of the whole Bengal and the Namasudras felt blessed to touch the feet of the Lord of the world. As if the full moon, He came in touch with all the wretched, and disseminated his love to all the families of Bengal. So many blind people got their sight, the dying ones got new life, and many diseases were eradicated. All the people know, there was a sadhu named Hiramoni in a farm at Routh. There was a corpse lying on the ground and the people leaving him behind started for Orhakandi. The mercy of Sri Hari brought him back to life. The people in many places hailed the name of Hari. The people in groups gathered and rushed out and fell at the red feet. All shouted, Sri Hari Thakur, the saviour. God came to the family of human beings and the life of the people got rejuvenated and that day there was born the Namasudra community.

So far, they had none like Him, and so, now they got united and this is why the Namasudras could realize their own identity. My kind father flung shells towards all the ill tastes and misrules, at every moment of his life. He being a wretched one himself provided the Namasudras with education in order to establish them as social beings in this world. He united all the Namasudras who had been scattered here and there, devoid of any rhythm in life. He exhorted them, O you Namasudra brethren, there's no path other than religion. Why do you give up religion and court death thereby? People are engaged in falsity, adultery, and the sacred human race is smeared now. In spite of being human, they are living a bestial life day and night. Did God create you for this? Even considering the rituals as the best policy, you have deviated from the path, and so, you are deprived of a good moral character. You don't know the core of the philosophy of Vaishnavism and you think that you have stored a

healthy amount of punya. The sinners consider the abstruse rules of Vaishnavism as the pure religion and thereby in the present life they've spoiled their afterlife. Their exterior is pleasant but the interior is odorous and they want to conquer the whole world with words of mouth, but their heart trembles. Piousness is not so easy. Is sin so light that you may shake it off and get reprieved thereby? Black will take no other hue. Is he not a fool who gives up diamond and picks up a piece of glass? If you are to wash off your taint please plunge into fire, and the dirt will be burnt off. Give up all the sinful thoughts and words and shake off all the smeariness, and then you'll attain a pure character and gain supreme wealth. Religion is not something that exists afar. Leaving your family, you search for it but in vain. Religion lies sleeping at your home. Keep your character pure and speak the truth, utter the name of Hari and thereby light the lamp of religion. You'll get more at your home than in far off places. What result will your pilgrimage beget? At your places there are so many thieves and they have made your life miserable. Pilgrimage wastes your money and brings about your ruin. If one's family is all well what's the necessity of pilgrimage. The Lord of the holy place stays in his/her family. See the proof— the rituals of the Pandavas; Krishna, their wealth, was in their family for their whole life. Maintaining his domestic religion king Yudhishtira considered his mother's order more important than the Vedic preaching. The five brothers had as if a single soul and the younger ones respected the eldest as their father day and night. Purity pervaded their character; no mark of laziness was there. Everyone performed his own duties as per the order of the eldest. Draupadi was a pious lady who satisfied her five husbands whom she tied up with the bondage of love. As Vyasa wrote, the five pious brothers performed meditation and yogic exercises. They were engaged in homely religion, always spoke the truth and thereby conquered the whole land up to the vast sea. Pilgrimage is seldom necessary for a man who has Krishna at his home; the home itself is like all the holy places. Steadiness even in warfare makes one a Yudhishtira; please remain steady in your life struggle. As the very touch of a rejuvenating panacea removes one's pain, the preaching of Sri Hari brings about an awakening. That power so far remained confined and now the Namasudra families see the new sun after the darkness is over. He kept on preaching, door to door, to keep character pure in simple life and simple rituals. Work in hand and holy name in your lips will bring you moksha. He disseminated the name of Lord Hari door to door. He drove off all the infatuation and pomp. Bragging never makes one great. Stop bragging and perform all your duties whether great or small. Bragging begets nothing. It's performance that defines the performer. My father preached all these in all the families, and thereafter the Namasudras were tied up with a single cord. Not only the Namasudras but all the wretched

ones must get united and start a pious war together—Teli, Mali, Kumbhakar, Jola, Tanti, Malakar, Brahmin, Kayastha, Baidya and Nabasakh, all. So many sorrowful Muslims came forward and to get Harichand they said that we all are the same. Domestic religion, sacred rituals were prescribed by my father, and the downtrodden and fallen people rose up in utter exhilaration. They were absorbed in his mood and got crazy in love for him; this is why they are titled ‘Matua’. Before his final departure my father called me and said something that I accepted as the most important preaching. With his orders kept in my mind I roam about home and the world. O you, all my beloved delegates, please listen to me.

Any community devoid of education must be considered to be a wretched one. Even if such a man gathers huge amount of wealth and wins a good reputation, all go in vain; people laugh at him. Desire for knowledge made the *munis* undergo so long *tapasya*. It’s knowledge, and only knowledge that made the earth so beautiful in the universe. The Vedas, the Smritis, the Sruti— all were created with knowledge. This is why Binapani, the mother of knowledge is perfect in all qualities. Empowered with knowledge the goddess is the sweetheart of Paramesh. She illuminated the world with her light of knowledge. The unending and uncapturable is the supreme one because of His *lila*. Assuming beauty and winning virtues He shows his huge body in the universe. The creation is aberrated and so, His maya is revealed to all. The unknown lady Binapani was known to all by the term ‘Bid’. Knowledge knows her well and so, acquiring knowledge Vyasa composed a ‘Bed’. The vowels and the consonants are the medium of knowledge and it is expressed in shape of letters. In various ways it is revealed with tune and sound. Man in this world tries to acquire knowledge with much efforts. Giving the shapeless a shape in words he keeps it as picture. During the age of the rishis India nourished knowledge and there bloomed an unprecedented and new phase of civilization. Krishna-Balaram went to the Sandipani for attaining knowledge. Blessed with knowledge Valmiki sang his theoretical lays. The whole world knows, Ratnakar, the dacoit was engaged in a sinful profession and spent his days by committing robbery in jungle. Once upon a time Narad, the courtier of the Lord, was passing through it. On seeing him, Ratnakar, the dacoit, got exhilarated. Launching an attack he said, today none can save you; give me whatever alms you have gathered today. Narad was an amicable person and his face showed no mark of fear. He replied smilingly, “Listen, Ratnakar, you are doing utter injustice to me for nothing. I am a vagabond, I wander here and there day and night, I have no residence; I depend on all, where can I get wealth? I can’t be spared today, as you said, but that can seldom frighten me. Who can kill and whom? Who saves and

whom? All is done by Lord Hari. One who creates also kills. He is the omnipotent. Say, where can you and I get strength. The powerless can't be freed. Think in yourself, why do you do robbery in jungle? Why do you call for your own ruin?" The dacoit smiled and said, "O you, the fake rishi, you are skilled at cunning. You have planned to convince me with your cunning words. I am not such a person as Lord Shiva whom you can gull with mere wood-apple leaves. I'm Ratnakar, not of that type; so, give up such a hope. You've memorized so many religious sayings and uttered much of it. I don't know much but yet listen, you, *muni*, what your Gita says. 'Save yourself always'— this is the opinion of the great ones, and the core of religious theory. You must look after your own kith and kin carefully and don't ignore this duty. In order to save life, all in this world seize others' goods. Whatever one does for saving one's own life is not considered sin. So, in order to look after the members of my family I do this. I've said, I do it for self-protection and I don't bother about sin. To rear the sheltered ones is prescribed as a holy task in the Vedas. My father, mother, wife and brother depend on me and survive thereby. I don't see any sin in rearing the relatives. Give up your rubbish words and empty your bag and give me all the alms." Good Narad recollected the image of Lord Narayan and said to the dacoit, "Listen, Ratnakar, please think about my words. You said that to rear the relatives is the Vedic prescription. You have ruined yourself for your relatives; but did you ever call them and ask, 'Listen, my wife, my brother, my son, is the way I follow in jungle good or bad?' Please know what they argue. Do they support your activities? Do they agree to share the aftermath of your activities? Otherwise, you alone are witnessing the sport always. Please go to your home once and ask them all. Will you alone bear all the sins of your misdeeds?" The words of Naradsent Ratnakar into deep thoughts. He thought, what have I heard today, something new? He shackled Narad there and went to his own residence. He asked all of them for whom he had been committing the sins. He asked, "Who of you agree to take a share of my sins?" Questioned by him, his father, mother, wife, brother all replied, "Only one who does anything will receive the reward or punishment. How do others receive it?" On hearing this reply, Ratnakar, the dacoit, got tensed and rushed out and went back to the jungle. He set his head at Narad's feet and said, "O my lord, you are very kind to meet me, you're virtuous. Please suggest me a remedy; the sins burn me and I can't survive. I have committed sins, lost the core of the message, and infatuation has made me crazy. The sin-poison stings me and I'm dying every moment, I've lost my strength. Please show me mercy; I'm like a sojourner in the sands and my thirsty soul is burning. Please show me mercy and give me a shelter at your feet." On hearing these appealing words, Narad Muni sympathized with him and said,

“Listen, Ratnakar, don’t worry, don’t get afraid of sin. Sit here still and keep on uttering the name of Lord Ram, day and night; he is the remover of sins. The flow of his name and the wave of love will take you to the sphere of moksha. Moreover, I give you the unprecedented message that will never be futile and it’s unknown to you. You’ll win mercy, your desire will be fulfilled, nothing else will happen. The goddess Bharati herself will sit on your tongue. You’ll compose the accounts of Lord Ram’s great deeds which is the mine of love-nectar.”The dacoit Ratnakar thereafter started his sadhana heart and soul. He body was perished and sin washed off and the sheer virtue of the Lord’s name kept him alive. So, pleased with this, goddess Saraswati took her seat on his tongue. Just when she sat there, there rose up a sweet, immortal music. He composed the epic the *Ramayana* and his sins were washed off. The mercy of the goddess of knowledge relieved him from his sins. The immortal Valmiki sang of Ram’s virtues as Pinaki does. Ratnakar died but Valmiki is immortal with the nectarous name in his lips. The life of anybody devoid of Bharati’s mercy is in vain. If mother sympathizes, even a blind man can gain his sight, a dumb person can talk.

Let me shift from the scriptural topic and tell you something else. Please think, what empowered the men and the women who introduced themselves as civilized ones. They gained knowledge, wealth and reputation and all the people respect them everywhere. One rich in intelligence is powerful, and the bodily strength is nothing at all. Knowledge begets intelligence and purifies the soul and it enriches intelligence.

The English race, though small in man-power has expanded their empire all over the world, and it is only with the virtue of their knowledge. And now they are respected by all, even the by the Aryans. The grace of Bani provides the learned ones with wealth, fame, respect, all. People say, the English kingdom never witnesses sunset. In this Bengal, you know, those who acquired education are reputed ones. Intelligence begets strength, and the foolish people are weak and are trampled down forever. It is with intelligence that the mahout leads the elephant, with a stick in his hand. We are strong in manpower; but what result does it beget? As we are devoid of education they dominate and exploit us. All the people strengthened with knowledge have captured enormous power. As we have no education, they keep us dead in life. So, I exhort, o my brethren, if we want emancipation, we must acquire education. If you get education your miseries will be gone and you’ll be happy forever in this world. Please listen, listen to me, you all the Namasudras, please come forward in order to acquire knowledge. If you get education, you need not be afraid of anybody, you need not

beg, you'll occupy royal power, your sufferings and pain will be gone. The future will testify to it. The Namasudras are strong but it is merely a strength of body. The whole nation today wants you to be illumined in the light of knowledge. O you Brahman's offspring! Be learned with the gleam of Brahma-Kshatra energy. Get united, O you two powers, and put on royal attire in this world. The Namasudras are poor, as said by some, and they bear a heavy burden of ill-fame. Alas! The cubs of lion have forgotten their identity and joined the flock of sheep. O you lions, get up, get up and revive your courage. One who set His feet on this world and created it will give you a shelter at His feet. In order to awaken you people, He appeared as an avatar in your clan. Will you people remain fameless and bear all the tortures even after getting God? All are devoid of education and so, are blind and remain in dark. Please light the lamp, throw all your infatuations away and then darkness will be gone. O my brethren, I tell you again, please ask all to wash off all the evil ideas today.

To consume leftover food and insecure travels are prohibited for women. Please set up schools and interact with each other and then fraternity will be formed there, and you'll come to know their whereabouts— their living places, their opinions and thoughts, their way of living, all. Please gather information of all your people living nearby as well as in far off places. Lack of education has caused our deprivation of wealth and we are now like beggars. If we get education and wealth our miseries will be gone. So, try to gather wealth heart and soul, but by honest means. Above all, you must keep your character pure. Purity must exist in your body as well as in mind. At every step of your daily routine remain neat and clean. Laxmi stays only where there is cleanliness, and no dirt. Social caste sentiment is an illogical thing; it gives birth to controversy only. Stop talking rubbish; get united and save your community. There are proofs that without royal power a community can seldom rise up. You must occupy royal power and move upwards in this world.

And unhealthy community has no bright future, and so, protect your own strength. Education and good health are sufficient to make one indomitable in this world. All your manners and interactions must be polished ones. You must be polite in your customs and culture; your gait and talks all must bear the mark of politeness at your home as well as outside it. The community is our common mother and we are all sisters and brothers, please be convinced. Please tie them up with a single cord and draw them into a single path. We have a relation of fraternity and so, whom to fear? Fear has gone afar. Lord Hari, the reducer of your burden was born in your community. O you Namasudras, rise up, you're not mean, feel proud of your community, show the whole world that none is more glorious than the

Namasudras. We have forgotten our self-identity. This is why we are in such a miserable condition. Please recollect your past accounts and let the power light you up. The communities that suffered so much miseries in dense jungles in order to save their religion can take up weapons in their hand and kill lakhs of enemies. The motherly community that provides all the families with food and has a character as pure as of a boy, has courted poverty. They are, like Dadhichi Muni, engaged in the mission of welfare of other people. Dadhichi was a self-forgotten rishi who sacrificed himself smilingly without any hindrance. He was a pious one with the sheen of holiness, bright in love, with cloudy eyes. The Namasudras don't know any deceitfulness; never tell a lie. In a dark cave a lion was sleeping, but thinking it dead, the restless foxes assembled there and started making high-pitched noises. O you lions, wake up and shake your mane, make a loud and terrific roar so that there may come down the shell of Lord Indra. Crush down the skulk of the foxes under your claws and then move forward. Let the Namasudras prevail— let this slogan rise from every family.

Speech Delivered at the Khulna Namasudra Conference, 1930

The Namasudra is a wretched caste ever deprived of education; none of them has occupied a royal position. They don't know politics; how can they accompany the caste Hindus in their path? Our concern for bread and butter is a severe one; how can we think of something else? Our heart always keeps on burning. Those who are at the top of the social tree brag much. It's a path solely for them; we have a different path of our own, that we all follow. Sacrifice is preceded only by consumption; we have nothing to consume; what is there to sacrifice! We merely long for the consumables. We want education, wealth, clothes, ornaments etc. and we also want to be judges and magistrates. We long for a chance for crossing the sea in order to see what we get there. Why should we keep on bowing our heads down? Today you have courted the politics of non-cooperation. This community will never flourish. You are ever in darkness, and this darkness will never be over. Blessed are they who are ready to sacrifice their lives. Who is the fool that hates patriotism and service to the nation? But there are limitations in rules. If independence comes, what can be better than that? I am not too blind to realize it. But I don't step out and follow their path because there are many obstacles and hindrances which I can't avoid. For sake of logic I say, suppose the underdeveloped communities join the group, what result will it bring to them? What will they do? What assignments will be allotted to them? How many of them are in jobs? How many of them are

in legal practices? If we think of the rates of dropouts from schools, we see, almost all of them are dropouts. Therefore, I say, this policy does not suit the underdeveloped communities. This policy suits only the people who belong to the so called 'upper' castes, who have populated the schools and legal courts. But what a wonder! Only very few of them have resigned and most of them are in jobs. They file cases in legal courts every day, and everywhere I see the schools running. Please see it and learn how the world is running. Foolish intelligence is now quite obsolete. Sometimes cunning tricks are also necessary. Independence is undoubtedly a very good thing. Please don't forget what you read in "Kathamala" in your childhood days. If you draw out the bone from the tiger's throat, you will get a handful of ash as reward. The great people are devoting themselves. But your share is nothing. Listen, please. Many good souls are sacrificing themselves. But can you say, when independence is achieved who will be benefitted? The people who are now the leaders will get united and constitute the rules of administration. You have no place in that royal court. You are mere musical instruments. The war drums are necessary only in the time of war. When the battle is over, who searches for the drums? If you can become the army officer, you have a future but you are now devoid of the requisite qualities. Where will this community find the qualities that make one an army officer? They are merely babies in the path of awakening. Can they be compared with those who are running at the high speed of a full-grown youth? When you reach that young age, you too will have that mood, and proper time will lead you forward. But now it is not at all necessary, and so, please forget that. For sake of development of the community please shake off selfishness, and think of sacrifice day and night. My caste is my religion, my repute, my God. Let there be no thought other than that—be it in education, wealth, art, science or polity. Both male and female be engaged in every work, every moment, and go forward. Shake off your laziness and say to yourself in thunderous voice, go forward, no time to waste.
