

Gaudiya-Sampradaya-Tattva

The Nature of the Succession in Gaudiya Vaishnavism

Svami Sadananda Dasa to Vamandas;
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What Prabhupad¹ pointed out, but could not change, was the fact that the official Caitanya movement actually has nothing to do with Caitanya, and that a true follower of Caitanya is something else than a sentimental, muddled and immoral person, and that a true follower of Mahaprabhu should be able to profess himself as such without feeling ashamed of himself and fearing that he will be put in the same category as those who wrap the mantle of the learned, the bhakta and the cult over their own social, intellectual, spiritual and moral inferiority, and as those who in the name of Mahaprabhu and His cult justify themselves while dealing with more or less shady activities.

Soon after Mahaprabhu all lies in ruins.

Shankara tried to squeeze the Absolute into an intellectual narrow bed. God has to comply with the laws of human logic and like every other system this does more or less violence to God. Formlessness is just one of the manifold forms of the Absolute.

Mahaprabhu did not create any new system, nor did Jiva Gosvami. Acintya-bhedabheda² is a conclusion, a siddhanta, the conclusion drawn when one considers the Revelation as a whole. When the Upanishads talk about unity and duality, distinction and non-distinction, and with this double statement want to make a statement about God's nature, it follows that God simultaneously is form and not form, one and manifold etc. This may be

¹ Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur.

² Acintya-bheda-abheda. Inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction. Bheda = distinction, abheda = non-distinction. Acintya = Only cognizable through the realization of the unrestricted import of the Shastram-s. (Shridhara in Vishnu-Purana-tika I,3,2)

contrary to the laws of human logic, but God and His nature are in no way confined to obey mundane, human laws of thinking.

The word *acintya-bhedabheda-vada*³ appears only later. Mahaprabhu and His contemporaries had no intention whatsoever to create a new system in addition to the existing opposition between the monistic and dualistic systems, but wanted to show that one does violence to the Absolute when one tries to squeeze it into the systems of monism or dualism, and instead of accepting the double statements of the Revelation only adhere to *one* side of it.

Bheda: the non-identity of two things when it comes to their substance and attributes. Bheda prevails in the relation between God and the world. The world is not, consequently only God remains. On the other hand, there is variety within God Himself.

Mahaprabhu brought the people into the stream of kirtana and chanting of the Name, where each and everyone then evolved according to his own nature. He led people to Krishna-bhakti, some to Radha-Krishna, others to Rama, others to Narasinha, but added that all these (other) forms are not *svayam rupa*⁴.

Emphatically, He drew attention to the fact that *svayam rupa* is Krishna or *Svayam Bhagavan Vrajendra-Nandana*. As a consequence, He wanted to lead the genuine bhakti of every group of *jiva-atma-s* to the respective forms of HIMSELF, *and* lead those, who according to their atmic nature (*svarup*) belong to the bhakti to *Vrajendra-Nandana* in *anugatya gopi-bhava*⁵, to this form of bhakti, and out of them especially lead those who are qualified to value it, to the greater intensity in the separation (*viraha*) between Radha and Krishna, and the service of Them, overcoming Their separation.

Mahaprabhu's closest and most direct disciples are consequently those who in their service (*anugatya*) of Mahaprabhu want to attain the service (*anugatya*) of the *nitya-gopi-s*, overcoming the separation of Radha and Krishna.

³ Vada = teachings.

⁴ God Himself, as He is in Himself.

⁵ To serve under the *gopi-s*, in their spirit (*bhava*).

Accordingly, we find in the historical development of Mahaprabhu's group of disciples only those who after His tirobhava [disappearance] lead to the seva of Vrajendra-Nandana in seva of His parishadas.

Among those there are also those who according to their nature – in seva of the respective parishada-s⁶ – belong to Vrajendra-Nandana in the form of the Child, the Companion and Friend, or the Lord (and they have their own lila-literature and anugatya-seva), but practically the whole sampradaya, in its esoteric form, is dedicated to Radha-Krishna-sadhana, i.e. Vrajendra-Nandana-Kishori [Krishna, the Youth], in anugatya of Radha's parishada-s, and consequently, as Radha, ontologically speaking, is closer and dearer to Him than Himself, and is the One who constitutes the complete fullness of seva to the Beloved, in intensity and extensiveness, the goal of the esoteric sadhana of practically the whole sampradaya is *dasyam of Shri Radha in anugatya of the eternal companions (nitya-parishada-s) in the form of Her female playmates and friends, companions and maid servants*, excluding not only the inner and personal interest for seva of Krishna's other forms, such as Rama, Dvaraka-Krishna etc., but also the inner and personal interest for seva in anugatya of svayam rupa Vrajendra-Nandana in the form of the Child, the Companion or the Lord, and even more, excluding the direct will to serve Krishna as Kishora Krishna and finally even the direct will to serve Radha.

Mahaprabhu has expressed the ideal of this form of seva as: *gopi-bhartur pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanudasa*⁷.

Just as Mahaprabhu's nature as Radha and Krishna is treated as a well-preserved secret by Mahaprabhu and His followers, the inner interest of the members of the sampradaya for the inner seva – which only the self [the atma] can participate in – is a rigorously preserved secret, which only a few, who themselves take part in this seva in full awareness, can exchange closely guarded secrets about – and even that is very rare.

To reveal this secret to others, who themselves have not been awakened and to those who themselves do not belong to the same level or group of anugatya, is in itself inconceivable – and when this is spoken or written about

⁶ God's eternal co-actors, associates.

⁷ I am a servant of the servant of the servants of the lotus feet of Krishna, Who is the most Beloved of the gopi-s. (CC. Madhya 13.80)

in public, this is an indication that the person in question lacks the most elementary qualifications for grace. Otherwise, the power (shakti) of grace, which bestows wisdom and knowledge, would have given the knowledge that these things are secret and must remain secret, just as Mahaprabhu carefully preserved the secret of His Own being as Radha and Krishna, and of the viraha-bhava⁸ and – where it was revealed – quickly and carefully concealed it again.

⁸ The bhava of separation.