

Gaudiya-Sampradaya-Tattva

The Nature of the Disciplic Succession in Gaudiya Vaishnavism

Svami Sadananda Dasa to Vamandas
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Into English, in square brackets, footnotes and

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What Prabhupad [Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati] 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, immoral person, and that a true adherent of Mahaprabhu should be able to profess himself as such without feeling ashamed of himself and fearing that he would be thrown into the same category as those who wrap the mantle of the learned, the bhakta and the cult around 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 business.

Soon after Mahaprabhu, everything lies in ruins. Shankara tried to squeeze the Absolute into an intellectual, narrow bed¹. God had to comply with the laws of human logic, and like every system, this violates God's nature. Formlessness is just one of the forms of the manifold forms of the Absolute.

¹ In another text of his, Sadananda writes about "Proceruces' bed". In Wikipedia, one can read: "Proceruces was a host who adjusted his guests to their bed. Proceruces, whose name means 'he who stretches', was arguably the most interesting of Theseus's challenges on the way to become a hero. He kept a house by the side of the road where he offered hospitality to passing strangers, who were invited in for a pleasant meal and a night's rest in his very special bed. Proceruces described the bed as having the unique property that its length exactly matched whomsoever lay down upon it. What Proceruces did not volunteer was the method by which this 'one-size-fits-all' was achieved, namely as soon as the guest lay down, Proceruces went to work upon him, stretching him on the rack if he was too short for the bed and chopping off his legs if he was too long. Theseus turned the tables on Proceruces, fatally adjusting him to fit his own bed."

Mahaprabhu did not create any new system, nor did Jiva Gosvami. Acintya-bhedabheda² is an inference, a conclusion, a siddhanta, a conclusion drawn when one considers the Word Revelation as a whole, i.e., 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 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 term acintya-bhedabheda-vada³ appears much later. Mahaprabhu and His contemporaries had no intention whatsoever to create a new system in contrast to the existing dissimilar monistic and dualistic systems, but wanted to show that one violates the Absolute when one tries to squeeze it either into the monistic or dualistic system, and instead of accepting the double statements of the Word Revelation only accept *one*. Bheda: non-identity of two things regarding their substance and attributes. Bheda is true for the relation between God and the world. The world is not, consequently only God remains. On the other hand, there is a variety within God Himself.

Mahaprabhu brought the people into the stream of kirtana and singing of the Name, where each and every one then evolved in accordance with his own nature. He led the people to Krishna-bhakti, some to Radha-Krishna, others to Rama, others to Narasinha, but added that all these (other) forms are not svayam rupa⁴. Emphatically, He drew attention to the fact that svayam rupa is Krishna or Svayam Bhagavan Vrajendra-Nandana⁵. Consequently, at the same time, He wanted to lead the genuine bhakti of every group of jiva-atmas to the different forms of *Himself*, and lead those, who in accordance with the nature of their atma (svarup) belong to the bhakti to

² Acintya-bheda-abheda. Inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction. Bheda = distinction, abheda = non-distinction. Acintya = Only cognisable through the realisation of the unrestricted import of the Shastrams. (Shridhara in Vishnu-Purana-tika I.3.2)

³ Vada = teachings, system.

⁴ God Himself, Bhagavan as He is in Himself.

⁵ The Son of Nanda, the chief of Vraja.

Vrajendra-Nandana in anugatya gopi-bhava⁶, to this form of bhakti, and out of them especially lead those who are qualified to appreciate it, into the greater intensity of the separation (viraha⁷) between Radha and Krishna, and the service of Them in Their efforts to overcome this separation.

Mahaprabhu's most intimate and direct disciples are thus those who in their subordinated service (anugatya) of Him want to attain the subordinated service (anugatya) of the nitya-gopis, in their efforts to end the separation between Radha and Krishna.

In the historical development of Mahaprabhu's group of disciples after His tirobhava [disappearance], we thus find only those who lead to the seva of Vrajendra-Nandana in anugatya of His parishadas⁸. And even though there are also those among them, who in accordance with their nature, in anugatya of the different parishadas, belong to Vrajendra-Nandana in the form of the Child, the Companion and Friend, or the Lord (and they all have their own lila-literature and anugatya-seva), 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 parishadas. And consequently, as Radha, ontologically speaking, to Him is closer and dear than Himself, and the One who constitutes the complete fullness of seva of the Beloved – in intensity and extensity – the aim and goal of the esoteric sadhana of practically the whole Gaudiya sampradaya is *dasyam of Shri Radha in anugatya of the nitya-parishadas, Her eternal companions in the form of Her female playmates and friends, companions and maid servants*, excluding not only, all interest for the seva of other forms of Krishna, 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 will to serve Krishna as Kishora-Krishna directly and finally even the direct will to serve Shri

⁶ To serve under the gopis, to serve in the same spirit (bhava), with the same purity as they do, with the exclusive wish to give joy to Krishna, without even the slightest wish to experience any kind of joy of one's own.

⁷ The intensity of prema is greater in separation than in union.

⁸ God's eternal co-players, His associates.

Radha directly. Mahaprabhu has expressed the ideal of this form of seva as: gopi-bhartur pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanudasa⁹.

In the same way as Mahaprabhu's nature as Radha and Krishna is kept secret by Mahaprabhu and His parishadas, is the deep, inner interest to the members of the sampradaya for the inner, confidential seva – which only the self [the atma] can participate in – a rigorously preserved secret, which only a few, two or more – and this also only rarely, who themselves, in full awareness take part in this seva – can exchange well-preserved secretive thoughts about.

To reveal this secret to others, who themselves are not awakened, and to those who themselves do not belong to the same level or group of anugatya [subordinated service], is in itself inconceivable – and when this is spoken of or written about in public, this is an indication that the person in question lacks the most elementary conditions for God's Mercy. Otherwise, the potency (shakti) of Mercy, which bestows wisdom and true knowledge, would have given the insight that these things are confidential and must remain confidential, just as Mahaprabhu carefully preserved the secret of His Own being as Radha and Krishna, and viraha-bhava¹⁰ – and when it was revealed, quickly and carefully concealed it again.

⁹ I am a servant of the servant of the servants of the lotus feet of Krishna, Who is the most Beloved of the gopis. (CC 2.13.80)

¹⁰ The bhava of separation.