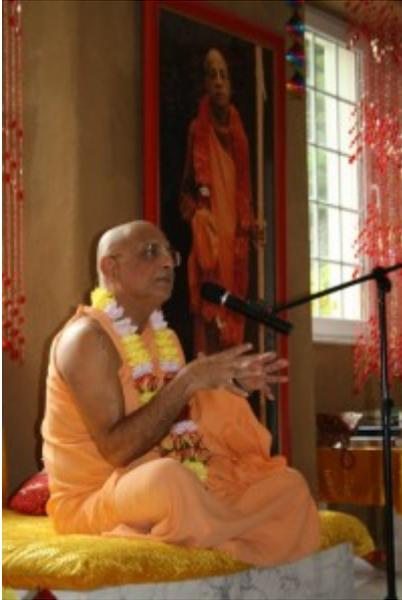


The History Of Vaishnava Heritage Part 3

THE FOLLOWING LECTURE GIVEN BY HIS HOLINESS BHAKTI CHARU SWAMI IS THE THIRD OUT OF NINE IN A WONDERFUL SERIES ON THE HISTORY OF VAISHNAVA HERITAGE.



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Nama om visnu padaya krsna presthaya bhutale
Srimate bhaktivedanta swamin iti namine

Namaste sarasvate deve gaura vani pracarine
Nirvishesha sunya vadi pascatyā desa tarine

Hare Krishna! Should I take the attendance now? It seems that many are not present as yet. They generally come in a little later. Anyway...

Everything that happens, every important incident that happens, and which is recorded chronologically is called history. So whatever had been happening in the Vaishnava movement, as we discussed, from the beginning of creation, is called Vaishnava history or culture, and that is what our heritage is. Krishna consciousness movement is not a new movement that started only 30 or 33 years ago, but this movement actually started at the very beginning of creation. And not only it started at the beginning of creation, but it exists eternally in the spiritual sky.

Every living entity, in its constitutional position, is a Vaishnava. One ceases to be a Vaishnava only when he is conditioned by the material nature. And that is what our heritage is. Krishna consciousness is not just a new movement or a cult. It is an age old, eternally existing spiritual characteristic of the living entities.

Now, we were considering how Krishna consciousness began in this universe. We all are acquainted with that concept, how it began. It began at the time of creation. When Brahma was confused, then Krishna came and gave this Krishna consciousness to him. Until yesterday we discussed how this movement had been spreading, or has been continuing through disciplic succession from Brahma to Narada and then it continued, and there had been some decline from time to time. When irreligiosity prevailed, then Vaishnava culture became obscured to some extent. And whenever the Vaishnava culture became obscured, then the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself came to reestablish this Vaishnava culture and that is the purpose of His incarnation. And in this way time actually moves through the higher concept called the yugas – satya yuga, treta yuga, dvapara yuga and kali yuga.

In satya yuga, dharma is very, very intact – the people are pious. The people are pious means they follow the principles of Vaishnava culture. True dharma is actually Vaishnava dharma. Impersonalism, although it is recognized as Dharma in India in the recent years, in the recent past, but impersonalism is not really the dharma. Shaivites, shaktas, they are not really the followers of religious principles. They are kind of deviations. The real dharma is Vaishnava dharma. To be surrendered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the dharma. Dharma doesn't mean to put up somebody else as the competitor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and to follow him. That is what the Shaivites and Shaktas do. Yesterday I intended to touch that part but I deliberately avoided because it takes up lot of time. But anyway, briefly I will describe.

Shaivites means the followers of Lord Shiva, and Shaktas means the worshippers of Devi, the female form of the expansion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Mahamaya, the personification of the external energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the cause of the material creation, or who is the controller of the material creation. The Lord glances towards Mahamaya and the material nature becomes manifest. That form of Mahamaya, or that personality of Mahamaya is the worshipable Deity of the Shaktas, the worshippers of Shakti, or energy, power.

In the modern vedic concept, the Shaivites and Shaktas, the worshipers of Lord Siva and the worshipers of Devi are considered to be followers of religion. But if we consider from the pure vedic point of view, then we can see that they are not really followers of dharma – it is a kind of deviation from dharma. The true dharma is to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to become the devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. There cannot possibly be any compromise. Of course, it is not that we are forbidding people from worshipping Shiva or Devi, but they have to be worshiped with the right understanding. And the right understanding is that Shiva is a Vaishnava and Devi is a Vaishnavi – Durga, Kaali, all these forms are Vaishnavis.

Now, worshipping them as Vaishnavas is alright. There is nothing wrong in it. Because worshipping them as Vaishnava means just as a Vaishnava worships another exalted Vaishnava. The devotees do worship them. But the difference between these worshipers of Lord Shiva, the Vaishnava, and the Shaivites, is that the Shaivites, the so-called followers of Lord Siva put up Lord Shiva as the competitor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Similarly, the Shaktas put up Kali as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But the real worship should be done with the understanding that they are devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In that worship, there is nothing wrong. It is rather advantageous. It is advantageous to worship them as Vaishnavas and Vaishnavis. Now, the spiritual culture, the Vedic culture went on in Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga, practically unhindered.

Because whenever there was difficulty, the Supreme Personality of Godhead came and rectified the situation.

But the trouble actually starts in the age of Kali. The trouble starts in the age of Kali. That we discussed yesterday, how Kali actually used the brahmanas to destroy the brahminical culture or Vedic culture. The protectors, care-takers and the executors of Vedic culture are the brahmanas. But Kali very expertly contaminated the brahminical culture through the brahmanas by making demoniac people take birth in the brahminical families. Those who were the executors of the brahminical culture, they were made to become the destroyers of the brahminical culture and they introduced all kinds of deviant and abominable activities in the name of Vedic culture.

And when, in this way, the Vedic culture was very badly affected and almost destroyed, then the Supreme Personality of Godhead appeared as Lord Buddha. And Lord Buddha made the followers of Vedic culture reject the Vedas. Now, the question may arise why the Supreme Personality of Godhead as Lord Buddha rejected the Vedas, which is the very foundation of the spiritual culture of this world. The reason was, all kinds of abominable activities, all kinds of sinful activities were going on in the name of Vedic culture, Vedic religion. Therefore, in order to stop that, Buddha told them to reject the Vedas.

Actually, when the Supreme Personality of Godhead makes His plans, His plans are quite extensive. It just doesn't happen all of a sudden. It is not that He comes and in one moment He rectifies the situation. He takes His time. Because we have to understand that the Supreme Personality of Godhead deals with eternal time. Therefore there is no dearth of time in His case. He has all the time. We may become impatient and say, "Why nothing is happening? Why there are so many difficulties and troubles and nothing is happening? No one is rectifying?" But the Lord will take His time and do His job. And it may take a few hundred years, it may take a few generations or even a few hundred years, but it will happen. Now here we can see the Lord's wonderful plan.

He came as Lord Buddha and the first thing He did is to reject the Vedas. He said, "There is no need to follow the Vedas." Because in the name of the Vedas all kinds of abominable activities were going on. So He said, "No need to follow the Vedas". Therefore the people who were involved in those abominable activities in the name of the Vedas, they just gave it up, gave up those abominable activities. And then He established some very simple principles of religion. He had 10 principles of how to become good. That is, always speak the truth, stay on the path of righteousness, do not inflict pain upon others, do not be violent on others, try to be compassionate towards others, so on and so forth. And He pointed out, that the goal of life is nirvana. And nirvana means to merge into nothing. That's why His philosophy is known as Voidism.

So we can see that the Vedas are giving the description that there is another reality beyond this material nature, the spiritual reality, and this material nature is a perverted reflection of that spiritual reality. But that concept was totally rejected, and Buddha just pointed out that the goal of life is to become one with nothing, or to become nothing. Ultimately the goal of life is to become nothing. And He had a whole philosophy to establish that point. And the point is something like, "this material nature is full of suffering. So our existence, our body, our entity is the source of suffering. So, when we become nothing, there won't be any suffering." Sounds convincing, does it not? (Laughs) If you don't have any better philosophy

than this, then this sounds fine. Yes, our existence causes misery. So, become nothing, and there won't be any misery.

So this was Buddha's teaching, and at that time, you will be surprised to know that entire India practically became Buddhists. Brahminical culture was just existing in some pockets. And tremendous thrust actually came from the patronage of the kings, especially Ashoka. And the kshatriyas started to become atheists.

Around that time another personality came, his name is Mahavira, and he is drawing the line similar to Buddhism, but he is drawing the line from Rishabhadeva. From Rishabhadeva to king Arhat. King Arhat was actually an imitator of Lord Rishabhadeva. He saw that Rishabhadeva was actually moving around like a mad man. He was not having any external consciousness. He was not wearing any clothes. He was not having any awareness of what was going on around him. Yet, thousands of people were following him. So he thought, king Arhat thought, "Although I am a king, people do not show me this kind of respect. My followers are not as loyal to me as to this person. So, if I start behaving like this person, then people will accept me as a very great personality. So he started to externally imitate Rishabhadeva. This has been recorded in Srimad Bhagavatam. King Arhad was actually the king of the province called Konka and Venka, and then there were different tirthankaras. Anyway, Mahavira actually drew the line from that. He thought that Buddha is gaining such popularity, and he thought that let me come up with another philosophy which is similar to that, and people will follow me also. And he presented that philosophy and basically the Vaisyas started to follow Mahavira. So in this way, in India the kshatriyas started to follow Buddha and the Vaisyas started to follow Mahavira as their opposition or revolt against the brahminical culture. So, as opposed to the brahminical culture, they came up with these 2 ideas. The kshatriyas generally follow Lord Buddha, and Vaisyas followed Mahavira. So the followers of Mahavira are known as Jains. And you will see in India still today most of the vaisyas are Jains. Anyway, in this way, India's spiritual culture saw a major deviation from the Vedic culture, from the Vedas.

So, after Buddhism had been established and the principle of non-violence had been established and the Vedic scriptures had practically been rejected, at that time Sankaracharya came. And Sankaracharya defeated Buddhism. Sankaracharya basically followed one logic, "you all speak of nirvana", he challenged the Buddhists, "You all are presenting that the goal of life is nirvana and you are saying that nirvana means "nothing". But this concept of nirvana is from the Vedas. And according to the Vedas, nirvana means to become one with everything." A completely opposite presentation – nirvana means to merge or to become one with the Absolute. But that Absolute is impersonal.

Now the question may arise, "Why did Sankaracharya present that philosophy?" He presented that philosophy because if he presented the entire vedic understanding to the Buddhists, then the Buddhists would immediately reject it, saying, "well, that is your religion. That is completely different from ours. You just carry on with your religion; we will carry on with our religion." But Sankaracharya's mission was to drive Buddhism out of India. Therefore he made this challenge, that "your nirvana, the concept of nirvana is a Vedic concept, and nirvana means to become one with the ultimate absolute, which is the cause of everything, and everything is that Brahman, the spiritual energy." Now Sankaracharya, in this way, very expertly, established the Vedas. And then, after Sankaracharya reestablished the Vedas and impersonalism had been established, then came Ramanujacarya, and Ramanujacarya came and established his philosophy known as visisthadvaitadvada, over

Sankaracharya's kevaladvaitadvada. The pure, kevala advaita vada. Kevala means "only" and advaita means non-dual, that means One, which can be termed as absolute monism.

But Ramanujacharya established his special concept of non-duality. The spiritual reality is non-dual. But then again, from the material perspective it is non-dual, it is one, but when we go there, then we find that there is variety. But the way Ramanujacharya defeated Sankaracharya's philosophy is very interesting. Ramanujacharya made a few points. Sankaracharya established that the forms that one worships, that mainly five different forms: form of Vishnu, form of Surya, form of Ganesh, form of Shiva and form of Devi – these five different forms are actually imaginary. In the initial stage, one cannot meditate upon the impersonal. Therefore one needs a form. But when one becomes accomplished in meditation, then he doesn't need the forms, he can throw the forms away and he can meditate upon the impersonal absolute.

And Sankaracharya's philosophy was that this nature is actually illusory. You see, impersonalism is also a vedic concept. At one stage, the Vedas do accept impersonalism. That impersonalism of the Vedas is known as brahmavada. And that Brahman is the spiritual energy and the spiritual energy is impersonal, but that energy is transformed into variety, which gives rise to the objects of this material nature. Like Brahman transforms gradually into pradhana, mahat-tattva, then into mind intelligence, false ego, then ether, fire, air, water, earth. In this way, they are transformations, gradually, gives rise to this material nature. But Shankaracharya pointed out that actually it is not transformation, because the Absolute cannot be transformed. It is only illusion. So the transformation theory is known as parinama vada – transformation of Brahman into material nature.

But Sankaracharya established a theory called vivarta vada, or the theory of illusion. Everything is illusion, everything is illusory, and he gave the example: just as one mistakes a rope to be a snake, just as one mistakes a mirage to be water, similarly, this material nature is illusory. So, Ramanujacharya pointed out that "Fine, the rope may appear like a snake, one may mistake a rope to be a snake, but somewhere the snake must be existing, that's why we are mistaking a rope to be a snake. Fine, in the mirage there is no water, but somewhere the water must be existing, that's why we are mistaking the mirage to be water. Therefore, we may consider that this is illusory, the variety of this material nature, but somewhere this variety must be existing and that's why we are mistaking this nature to be that reality. So in this way Ramanujacharya defeated Sankaracharya's kevaladvaita vada and he established visistadvaita vada and this is how personalism was established once again.

And then came Madhvacharya and he also made a massive onslaught on Sankaracharya's impersonalism. In this way, Vaishnavism had once again been established, but still there was a conflict, there was a continuous conflict between the impersonalists and the Vaishnavas. Sankaracharya's followers and the Vaishnavas. There were even violent attacks, lots of persecutions – Ramanujacharya's life was in danger many times. They tried to kill him, these impersonalists tried to kill Ramanujacharya even when he was just a young boy. It is a very interesting life actually, Ramanujacharya's life. Same thing with Madhvacharya.

Then Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu presented acintya bhedabheda tattva and in this way Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu harmonized both the impersonal and the personal concepts. And His point was that acintya – the subject matter that we are discussing about is acintya – beyond our mental concoction – beyond the region of our thoughts, beyond our sense perception. Therefore, the first thing He established is that

this subject matter is beyond our sense perception. Therefore, depending on our sense perception, we will never be able to come to the right understanding. Acintya khalu ye bhava na tams tarkena yojayet – the thing that is beyond our sense perception, that is beyond the realm of our thoughts cannot be established by mere arguments and logic. Is it clear? Does it make sense? The thing that is beyond our sense perception, can we establish that by our arguments and logic? No. therefore one must accept the evidence of the scriptures and the explanations of the acharyas. And in this way Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu pointed out that subject, that region is beyond our sense perception and that subject is beyond our intellectual verification.

Therefore just accept the authority of the scriptures and the self-realized souls. And then He established that that spiritual reality is one, at the same time different. From one point of view it is one. From another point of view it is different. And the subject matter of discussion and consideration are three basically. Ishvara, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, prakriti and jiva. Between Ishvara and prakriti there is similarity and difference, between the jiva and Ishvara there is similarity and difference, and between jiva and prakriti there is similarity and difference. So, in simple words, this is the sum and substance of acintya bhedabheda. So in this way Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu established the acintya bhedabheda tattva or the perfect Vaishnava understanding.

Not only Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu gave that, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, in order to draw everyone into His fold, He started a movement called the sankirtan movement. On one hand Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu gave the highest spiritual philosophy, highest spiritual understanding. But at the same time, He gave the process which is very simple and sublime. Whether one can understand the philosophy or not anyone can participate. And the process that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu gave is just sing and dance and honor Krishna prasadam – a very simple process. He used to have the sessions of chanting, dancing and after the chanting and dancing, a massive distribution of Krishna prasadam, Jagannatha prasadam. And after taking Jagannatha prasadam starts another session of chanting and dancing. And in this way there is a continuous festivity and by chanting one developed the understanding of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and reestablishes his lost relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then the entire philosophy actually became revealed in the heart.

This philosophy, the spiritual philosophy cannot be understood by mere studying of books. Cannot be understood just by some intellectual pursuit. This is revealed in the heart. When one receives the mercy of the Lord, this understanding is revealed in the heart, and that is the process that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu gave. And that's why Mahaprabhu Himself did not write any books. He simply presented his entire philosophy in 8 simple verses, 8 shlokas – sikshastakam. Yet, Mahaprabhu's followers, they wrote volumes of books establishing the supremacy of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings. So that is how wonderful Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mercy is. So today I will end here and I will invite questions.

Q. Why the Buddhists accepted the teachings of Sankaracharya.

A. it is not that they accepted, but people those days were fairly honest and when they were defeated, they accepted the concept. Because they saw that the other person what he is presenting is superior to their understanding. So they had to accept. They are not so thick skinned like the people of today – even if they are defeated, beaten to the pulp, still they do not want to surrender. But those days people were pretty honest, I would say, especially on the spiritual sphere. When they would have arguments, they would have discussions, whoever was defeated would have to accept the winner's concept, because he knew, he

accepted that “Well, you have the understanding better than mine. I will accept your understanding. And not that he was defeating everybody. Sankaracharya was actually defeating the Buddhist leaders, and when the leaders were defeated, their followers also accepted the defeat and followed Sankaracharya, and it is not that always they accepted their defeat and submitted themselves to Sankaracharya. Sankaracharya, you see, is Lord Shiva, and Lord Shiva has a good number of followers who are ghosts, hobgoblins, bhutas, pretas and pisacas. So with those he created an army. They are known as nagas. They go about naked and they carry a trident. So when somebody did not accept the defeat in a gentlemanly way, they were beaten up and driven out. So this is how Sankaracharya drove Buddhism out of India. (laughter)

Q. Why were the kshatriyas more focused on Buddhism and the Vaishyas on Jainism?

A. yeah. You see, that trend actually started with king Ashoka. You see, king Ashoka was the king of Magadha, the present day Bihar in India. He had a battle with the king of Kalinga, Orissa, and so many people died in that battle. He was quite tired of this battle. So many people died, and one night he saw a Buddhist monk, with a torch in his hand, he was going out and treating the wounded soldiers in the battlefield. So he was impressed. Then he started to speak to him and he became exposed to the teachings of Lord Buddha and then he decided not to fight any more. You see, so he became non-violent. Kshatriyas... this was another setback in the Vedic culture, because the Kshatriyas should never be non-violent. Kshatriyas have to be violent. If the Kshatriyas become non-violent, then who will give protection? So, due to that trend, the kings of India, the kshatriyas of India started to follow Ashoka's example and they became non-violent, they became Buddhists. Prior to that India was a very, very powerful country. We can consider the history of India. Although there have been many, many attacks on this land from different other parts of the world, from different corners, from different borders, but never ever had any invader succeeded in entering into India, because right at the border they had been defeated and driven out. But after the ksatriyas started to become Buddhists, there were no powerful kshatriyas to protect the country. And then due to the influence of Kali the kings started to fight among themselves internally and then only the foreign invaders could enter into India. The first invader who succeeded in entering into India was only 1100 years ago. Prior to that, no invader could ever enter into India. In the history of India we see that there was no invader who succeeded in entering into India. On the other hand, the Indian kings, the kings of India were actually ruling over the entire Earth planet. King Parikshit was ruling over the entire Earth planet. And how would they do that? Like other kings in other parts of the world were subservient to them, subordinate to them. They accepted him as the monarch. And that is how the Indian kings were ruling over the entire Earth planet. And actually every planet has one ruler. It is only in the Kali-yuga that that system breaks down. First they became many, many rulers. They don't want to accept the authority of one supreme powerful personality on this planet, and then gradually it ends up in democracy and communism. And then you find all third class people become elected as the State premiers and they pave the way to hell for everyone.

Q. Why the Vaisyas became Jains?

A. You see, generally the Kshatriyas were becoming Buddhists, and many of the Vaisyas were having their animosity or grudges against the Kshatriyas. They didn't follow Buddha, so they found a counter-culture. That was Jainism and they followed that. Basically when we see the teachings, both are similar. Both are talking about non-violence. But Jainism, Jains are just an imitation thing. But Buddhism, because it was started by the Lord Himself, it has some genuine religion in it. Like as Prabhupada said, indirectly by following Lord Buddha they became devotees. Indirectly, not directly they became the devotees of the Lord, but

indirectly – they were devotees of Buddha and Buddha is the Lord. Therefore, indirectly they became devotees of the Lord. And it is only a matter of time before they were converted into devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Yes, Phalguna ?

Q. Your class is very good and very short, Maharaja. Ramanujacharya established Vaishnavism, and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is also a Vaishnava. Was there any gap in between or....

A. There was a gradual development. You see, there were 4 sampradayas – Brahma, Rudra, Sri and Kumara. These are the 4 bona-fide Vaishnava sampradayas. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu actually, although He accepted initiation in Brahma Madhva sampradaya, but He actually accepted 2 principles from each of these 4 sampradayas and that is how He established the Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Now that is one similarity that Mahaprabhu established, but ultimately we will find a difference. And the difference is all other 4 sampradayas' process of devotion is Vaidhi Bhakti, whereas Chaitanya Mahaprabhu established Raga bhakti or Raganuga Bhakti. And the destination of other sampradayas is Vaikuntha, but Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu opened the gate of Goloka Vrindavana. So, yes, there is a difference between those Vaishnava sampradayas and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's Gaudiya Vaishnavism. That is what I am trying to gradually establish, that in the spiritual realm, we are the most aristocratic community. We are the greatest spiritual aristocrats. But that should not make us arrogant. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said, the higher you go, the more humble you become. The tree, the more it becomes laden with fruits, the more it bends down. Similarly, in spiritual life, the more one makes spiritual advancement, the more one becomes enriched with spiritual qualities, the more humble he becomes. Yes, Lila Madhuri?

Q. Unclear

A. Yes, I have to consult it, I forgot. I'll find out and give it to you. Actually when I was presenting it, I was thinking at the back of my mind, "My God! I have to brush it up." Yes, mother Prasanta?

Q. We already have our svarupa in the spiritual world.

A. You see, when it comes to the point of svarupa, we can't really delve into it, you know. Like yes, our svarupa is eternal, but what is our svarupa, we don't know. As long as we are in the material platform we will not be able to really understand what our svarupa is. We will find it out only when we go back to the spiritual sky. And when we go back to the spiritual sky, then we will find that our svarupa is in Goloka Vrindavana or Goloka Navadwipa and it is not a matter of imagination that some deviant groups actually propagate, that one can imagine one's svarupa. Is it a matter of our mental concoction, what our svarupa is? If our svarupa is nitya, then it is eternal, it is there. And as we cultivate spiritual process, sankirtana, gradually it will develop. But the fact of the matter is, when we attain, when we become elevated to the spiritual sky due to our becoming purified, then, even if we go to Vaikuntha, we will not be satisfied. Until and unless we go to Goloka Vrindavan or Goloka Navadwaip, we will not be satisfied. Even in the spiritual Dwaraka we will not be satisfied. Just like the residents of Vrindavana, when they see Krishna in Kurukshetra, they did not want to see Him in that way as a king and wearing all these royal robes and ornaments and armed with different weapons. They felt, "No. This is not the Krishna that we knew. Our Krishna is a cowherd boy. He wears a peacock feather, he has a flower garland. He wears a yellow silk dhoti. He tends the cows in the forest and plays flute." And due to the dissatisfaction, they started to pull his chariot. Krishna was up in the chariot to return to Dwaraka after the solar eclipse. That is the time the residents of Vrindavana saw Him and

they just started to pull the chariot, and that is the chariot festival. That is the mood of the followers of Lord Chaitanya. On one hand they are happy chanting the Holy Name of the Lord. They are just happy glorifying the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But they are not going to compromise for anything less than Goloka Vrindavana. And ultimately that is the svarupa of Mahaprabhu's followers. But again, one cannot rush into Goloka Vrindavana. One cannot force his way into Goloka Vrindavana. That will happen by the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When the Lord will desire, He will open the gate and we will find ourselves over there. In course of our discussion, we will also describe how Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is actually opening the gate to Goloka Vrindavana. May be that is what we will discuss tomorrow. Yes?

Q. In the 4 sampradayas, we have Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva, 4 Kumaras also appear in the list of the 12 Mahajanas in the 6th Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam. Laksmi is the founder of the Sri Sampradaya, the eternal consort of the Lord. Why her name doesn't appear in the list of Mahajanas?

A. Because she is the eternal consort of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. She is the personification of the pleasure potency of the Lord. So that is the reason. We follow the 12 mahajanas as exemplary. It is not that only the 12 Mahajanas are the Mahajanas. They are just classified as Mahajanas. But Lakshmi devi is the eternal consort of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In that way She is... Who can be a greater devotee than Her? Right. On a similar note one can question why Radharani isn't there, as one of the 12 Mahajanas. Or why Subal, Shridama, Vasudama and the friends of Krishna are not one of the Mahajanas? Because they fall in another category altogether. So, that is why they haven't been included. Because these Mahajanas, by their personal example, they are setting the standard of devotion. Yes?

Q. What contribution did Madhvacharya have to the establishment of Vaishnavism?

A. You see, Ramanujacharya established Visisthadvaitavada. And then Madhvacharya came and gave a tremendous thrust to the spreading of Vaishnavism with his extraordinary spiritual potency. What Ramanujacharya established, in its own way it is also complete, but Madhvacharya gave, in a way we can say more complete understanding. In Visisthadvaita vada, it is established that the spiritual reality is one but there is variety. But Madhvacharya defined that variety even more. The concept of duality, through Madhvacharya, became even more prominent. So that is one aspect, and another thing is that... like for example we can say that Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur spread Krishna consciousness. But Prabhupada came and gave a bigger thrust to his preaching. Similarly, Madhvacharya came and gave a bigger thrust into the works of Ramanujacharya, or, rather, establishing Vaishnavism. But Ramanujacharya gets a lot of credit because his mission was very difficult, because at that time India practically became impersonal, under the big wave of impersonalism but Ramanujacharya came and just fought against that and established the Vaishnava culture whereas Madhvacharya found that the field was quite created. Okay, it is already 5 past.

Hare Krishna!

All glories to Srila Prabhupada!