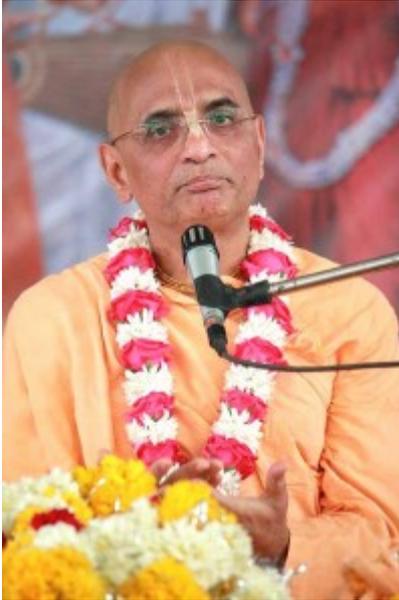


The History Of Vaishnava Heritage, Part 5

THE FOLLOWING LECTURE GIVEN BY HIS HOLINESS BHAKTI CHARU SWAMI IN ISKCON RADHADESH BELGIUM, 2004, IS THE FIFTH OUT OF NINE IN A SERIES ON THE HISTORY OF VAISHNAVA HERITAGE.



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Revealing His superexcellent pastimes from Goloka Vrindavan, which is this form of Krishna of Goloka Vrindavan, the Vrajendra-nandan Krishna is the Svayam Rupa Bhagavan. That is the original form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This Krishna, the son of Nanda Maharaja, whose form is like that of a human being, is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Then He expands. His first expansion is Balarama. Then from Balarama, there is the expansion of caturvyuha. That is Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. From that Sankarshana expands the Narayana forms of Vaikuntha. In this way expand different forms of the Lord in Vaikuntha like Nrsimha, Varaha, Kurma. They all have their special abodes in Vaikunthaloka.

In order to create this material nature, the Lord lies down in the causal ocean. From His body, the bubbles that come out are due to His respiration and different universes are formed. This is the general understanding of the expansions of the Lord and creation of the material nature.

When we go back, then we find that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is actually Krishna and His abode is Vrindavan. That abode of the Lord is even beyond Vaikuntha. There is a characteristic difference between Vaikuntha and Vrindavan. The difference is that Vaikuntha is the region of opulence. There Narayana is the Supreme Lord and everyone else is His servant. There the Lord displays His opulence as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Wherever we go in Vaikuntha, we find this mood. This mood goes all the way up to Dwaraka where Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the prince. Prince means opulence.

But Vrindavana is beyond that region because in Vrindavana the opulence has become secondary and love has become the prominent factor. In Vrindavana, we do not see opulence as such. We do not see apparent opulence. We do not see big, big palaces, such display of grandeur like we find in Vaikuntha. But in Vrindavana we see a very intense loving relationship between Krishna and His devotees. In that loving relationship, opulence has become secondary.

Therefore, apparently, Vrindavana is a forest. The residents of Vrindavana are just villagers and their occupation is just tending cows and cultivating the land, that also for the cows. There, we see that the Lord is not the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His devotees, His associates are not very exalted, noble personalities residing in absolute grandeur of the spiritual sky. They are actually living just like a group of village people. Their lifestyle is very simple. Their only asset and only concern is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Their love for the Lord is so intense and they are so absorbed in that love for the Lord that they do not care for anything else. Due to that love, we find that the opulence of Vaikuntha and Dwaraka become insignificant. They do not care for the opulence. We can see that the love is superior to opulence and that loving relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the highest achievement that one can have. In that pure love, they do not care for any opulence.

In these pastimes of Vrindavana, Krishna reveals only once in a day of Brahma. Brahma's day consists of one thousand cycles of Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. Each cycle consists of 4.32 million years. Therefore, each day of Brahma is comprised of 4.32 billion years. Once in a day of Brahma, Krishna, the original Supreme Personality of Godhead descends with His abode, Vrindavana.

He displays His superexcellent pastimes, the pastimes like that of a human being. It has been described in Chaitanya Charitamrita that of all Krishna's pastimes, the pastimes that are similar to the human being are the highest. Krsnero joteko khela tara madhye nara lila / nara vapuh tahara swarup. His form as a human being is His original form. Here we find one interesting quote from Bible also where it says that man has been created according to the image of God. This indicates that God's form is like that of a man. Here we can see also that Jesus has the understanding of Krishna, the two-armed form of the Lord. Even in Vedic understanding also, the understanding is generally that the Lord is four-armed, only in Vrindavan the Lord is two-armed. In Dwaraka, sometimes He is two-armed and sometimes four-armed. Only in Vrindavana is He present in His original form, the form like that of a human being.

This pastime of the Lord as a human being is the highest of all His pastimes because in these pastimes of the Lord in Vrindavan there is the possibility of developing a relationship with the Lord in friendship, parental and conjugal. This is not available in Vaikuntha. In Vaikuntha the relationship between the Lord and His devotees or associates is based on neutrality and servitorship. There, the Lord is the Supreme master and

everyone else is his servant. That is the general standard in Vaikuntha. Everyone is the servant and Narayana is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Everyone is worshiping Him as God.

In the higher region of Vaikuntha, there is Dwaraka. There we find the relationship with the Lord is going from servitorship into friendship. Lord Rama is asking Hanuman what He wants and Hanuman is saying, "My Lord, if you really want to bless me, then please give me your embrace." So this embrace is friendship. So, Hanuman, from servitorship, friendship is coming. The Lord is giving him His embrace. Otherwise, everyone is treating Lord Ramachandra as the Lord and Master. Then, in Dwaraka, we find that the friendship has become a little more developed. There is some maturity in friendship, like Uddhava. Krishna treats Him like a friend. Still, that friendship is in awe and reverence. The understanding is there that Krishna is God, Krishna is the Supersoul. Then, we come to Vrindavana and we find that not only friendship, but even parental and conjugal relationships are manifest in the most perfect way. So perfect, that they have forgotten that Krishna is God. Out of their intense love for Krishna, they forget that He is God and they don't want to treat Him like God. Their attitude is, "Even if you are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, so what?" In some cases, we see that they don't even care for the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

In Vaikuntha there is servitorship. The entire relationship is based on servitorship because Narayana is displaying His opulence as God and everyone is treating Him like God. Is it possible to develop friendship with God when you know that He is God? No, because friendship means playing, wrestling and sometimes, while they are wrestling, they have to fight with Him. Not only that, in wrestling there is a condition in Vrindavan that the loser has to carry the winner on his back. Sometimes, Krishna loses in that wrestling bout. Then, the cowherd boy who defeats Krishna says, "Krishna, now You have to carry me on Your back."

Krishna says, "No, No, I did not lose. I actually slipped on a banana peel. Then, you jumped on me and now you are claiming that you won. This is cheating. I did not lose."

Then he says, "No, Krishna, You lost and now You have to carry me on Your back." Then Krishna refuses. Then the friend of Krishna forces his way onto Krishna's back. Forcing his way onto Krishna's back, can you imagine what it has to mean? It means that he has to place his foot on Krishna's body and climb on to Krishna's back.

Now my question is, who will ever do that to Krishna on the altar? Will any devotee ever dare to put his foot on Krishna's form as the Deity? No, therefore, in order to develop that relationship, one has to forget that Krishna is God. That is what yogamaya does. Yogamaya makes everyone in Vrindavana forget that Krishna is God. Another way to look at it is that their love for Krishna is so intense that they do not remember that Krishna is God. Or, their feeling is, "So what if Krishna is God?"

Sometimes, Madhumangala tells Krishna (Madhumangala is a brahmin, the son of Sandipani Muni), "Krishna, after all, I am a Brahmin. You should show some respect to me."

Krishna says,” But you see, more important than birth is one’s deeds, the activities are more important. So you look at My activities, they are so extraordinary. So you have to recognize that I am also a very great personality.”

Madhumangala says, “See how conceited You have become.”

Krishna says, “See, I have done so many great things. When I was seven days old, Putana came to kill Me and I killed Putana. Then I killed Trinavartasura. When I was seven years old, I lifted Gira Govardhana. You saw how I subdued Kaliya. These are my superexcellent activities and you must recognize Me from My activities.”

Then Madhumangala starts to say, “Putana, when You were seven days old, what ability You had? You were just a little kid, but it is said that the demigods protect the children and old people. So it is the demigods who actually killed Putana and now you want to take credit for that. As far as lifting Gira-Govardhana, Nanda Maharaja, Balarama and all the cowherd men were propping Gira Govardhana up and you want to take the whole credit. Actually Gira Govardhana could be held up like that because all these powerful gopas were holding it up. As far as subduing Kaliya is concerned, You were finished, You were dead, everyone saw. Your bluish complexion became even darker due to his poison and You were in his coils. Everyone saw that You were finished. You were dead. Seeing You, Nanda Maharaja, Yasoda, they all fainted. Seeing that, I took pity on them. Then I started to chant the mantra to subdue a serpent. As a result of that, Kaliya became so frightened that he released You from his coils. Then You jumped up on his head and started dancing as if You have done a great job.”

So Krishna says, “O I see. So please accept My humble obeisances.”

This is how the devotees of Vrindavana treat Krishna. This is the most wonderful prerogative that Krishna provides to some very special devotees. Krishna performed these pastimes five thousand years ago in Vrindavana, in this earthly Vrindavana, Bhauma Vrindavana. Performing that pastime, Krishna considered that I revealed My pastimes in this world and only a few qualified people could be elevated to that pastime because in Vrindavana pastimes, Krishna actually comes with His nitya siddha associates from Goloka Vrindavana. Only a few sadhana siddhas are there who achieved their perfection and entered those pastimes.

They are known as Sruticharis and Rishicharis, the sages of Dandakaranya who desired this relationship with Lord Ramachandra during His pastimes in Treta Yuga and Lord Ramachandra fulfilled their desire and they were elevated to Vrindavana the exponents of the Upanishads also got entry to Krishna’s Vrindavana pastimes, but that is just a handful. So Krishna considered that, “I have revealed My Vrindavana pastimes, but how will one have access to Vrindavana, entrance to Vrindavana ?”

Because Krishna considered that generally a devotee serves the Lord according to Vaidhi Bhakti, following the rules and regulations one performs devotional service. When one attains perfection by following Vaidhi Bhakti, then one is elevated to Vaikuntha. One will automatically serve the Lord in Vaidhi Bhakti and go to Vaikuntha. “So how will one get his entry into Vrindavana,” Krishna started to consider. The devotees will serve the Lord in awe and reverence through Vaidhi Bhakti and the destination is Vaikuntha.

Therefore, Krishna decided to come as a devotee, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. By serving this devotee Krishna in Vaidhi Bhakti, one will be able to enter into Vrindavana. So the reason why Krishna appeared as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu after His Vrindavan pastimes in Dvapara Yuga is to allow living entities entry into Goloka Vrindavana. If you serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, you will naturally serve him in Vaidhi Bhakti. By serving Him in that way, you will go to Vaikuntha where you achieve perfection. But when one serves the devotee Krishna, Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, in awe and reverence, then he will get his entrance to Vrindavana, when he attains perfection by attaining the mercy of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. So this is one of the hidden reasons why Krishna appeared as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. That devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead in Vaidhi Bhakti means in Shanta rasa and Dasya Rasa. Mahaprabhu means the Supreme Master; therefore, we all are His servants. When we serve Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as a servant then we get an entry to Vrindavan, or the gate of Vrindavana opens up for us.

Question Unclear

Serving Krishna as God, that will be by Vaidhi Bhakti. Through Vaidhi Bhakti our destination will be Vaikuntha. But when we serve Krishna as a devotee, not as God, by serving the Lord as a devotee, we get entry to Vrindavana. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came as a devotee meaning Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came assuming the mood of Srimati Radharani. What is the way to enter into Vrindavan? By surrendering to one of the residents of Vrindavan. When we are surrendering to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, whom are we actually following? Srimati Radharani, that is how we are getting access to Vrindavana. That is why He assumed this form: to enable the living entities in the age of Kali to have an access to Vrindavana.

Vrindavana devotion means love, loving devotion where rules and regulations are not important but the spontaneous love of the heart is what matters. Rules and regulations become secondary and the love becomes the principal consideration.

The devotion is called raganuga bhakti. That is the difference between Vaikuntha and Vrindavana. In Vaikuntha, it is vaidhi bhakti. In Vrindavana it is raga bhakti. Raga means love. Raga actually means the color, that is the real expression of raga. What is the color of heart? The color of heart is emotions. When we approach Krishna with that emotion of heart, that heart, that is raga bhakti.

Question unclear

Very few got it, very few fortunate ones. One example is those rishis, the sages of Dhandakaranaya who had the opportunity to come across Lord Ramachandra. They spontaneously felt a kind of love for Lord Ramchandra, but as lord Ramchandra, that desire could not be fulfilled. So, Lord Ramchandra assured them that when I come in Dvapara Yuga as Lord Krishna, then you can develop that relationship with Me. So they got that access. Or some devotees who had become almost perfect, to smooth out the rough edges, they got entrance into the Vrindavana pastimes. They were born in the houses of the Gopis as a cowherd boy or cowherd girl. Then they developed their relationship and went back to Godhead. So it was very, very rare in other ages, especially before Dwapara Yuga. You can see in this age how easy it has become. That is the mercy of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. That is the mercy of Srila Prabhupada.

Question : If we get entry in Vrindavana by serving Chaitanya Mahaprabhu does that mean that we do not practice raganuga bhakti?

Raganuga bhakti we have to enter very carefully and the mood should always be that we are not qualified. If we think that “ Yes I am qualified and I am after all, not an ordinary personality,” that will be very, very dangerous. Our mood should be that we are not qualified. That is why our acharyas did not speak so much about raganuga bhakti. They simply wrote about. Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur hardly spoke about raganuga bhakti . He barely uttered the name of Srimati Radharani. One has to be very, very careful. We feel unqualified but when Chaitany Mahaprabhu considers that we are qualified, then it will happen from within our hearts, from within ourselves . That is the way to enter into raganuga bhakti. But if we try to trespass into that region then we are running the risk of becoming sahajiyas.

Why Chaitanya Mahaprabhus movement suffered such a setback after His disappearance? Because people did not understand and they started to prematurely delve into it. The result was they became sahajiyas. That is the caution that we have to take. Actually Mahaprabhu came to give it to us.

Bhaktisiddhant Saraswati Thakur, when he was taking the Deities from Ultadanga Road to Baag Bazaar when they built the temple, he was singing one song, “pooja rago patha gaurava bhange matala sadhu jana bisaya range”. The pooja rago patha, the accepting and worshiping the path of raga and the awe and reverence, or vaidya bhakti became bhange, subdued or suppressed. And the mood actually is matala sadhu jana bisaya range, the sadhus become involved in vishya, apparently materialistic activities like building big, big temples. This is our understanding raga bhakti. For the sake of spreading Krishna consciousness, we are going to accept anything.

That is the mood that Srila Prabhupada established in a most perfect way. In ISKCON we see that devotees are using all material facilities, a person that is less informed will think, “what is happening? They are supposed to be sadhus but look at their activities,” Many people cannot relate to sadhu flying around the world, building big, big temples, meeting with all kinds of important people in the world, dealing with millions of dollars. Is this what a sadhu is supposed to do? No, but why are these sadhus in ISKCON doing that or why are the followers of Bhaktisiddhant Saraswati Thakur doing that: because of their love for the supreme personality of Godhead and loyalty to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu`s mission. This is what serving Chaitanya Mahaprabhu means.

Chaitany Mahaprabhu wanted to spread Krishna consciousness all over the world. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu`s followers, like Srila Prabhupada, considered that if we just sit under a tree on the bank of the Ganges, that is not going to happen. If we want to spread Krishna consciousness all over the world, we have to take advantage of all these material facilities, of all the advancement this world has made, like using aircrafts, computers, everything for the sake of spreading Krishna consciousness. Our understanding of raga bhakti is this. Not just sitting in a isolated corner and imagining Radha-Krishna`s pastimes. That is fine, but Srila Prabhupada reminded us that that should be done very carefully and at very advanced stage.

Prabhupada pointed out that when the heart is completely free from sex desire, then only one should meditate on those pastimes. Otherwise, one will run the risk of falling down. That is the caution that has been give. The point is that in order to follow the raganuga bhakti we have to be very careful. Internally we should feel that

we are not qualified we will never have access You see, we gain access when we are qualified. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu will lead the way.

Srila Prabhupada once actually told me, not me, but I was present in the room, Srila Prabhupada told someone who wanted to know about spiritual identity, about his swarupa. Prabhupada got very angry and started chastising: “Do not worry about your swarupa. When the time comes, I will personally come and give you your svarupa.” So why hurry? Isn’t it wonderful to be engaged Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s sankirtan movement? When you already have this wonderful engagement, let’s just be completely satisfied and content. Then, in due course of time, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu will bestow His mercy upon us. On the other hand, if we prematurely try to enter into raganuga bhakti, then we will run the risk of becoming sahajiyas. What does sahajiya actually mean? One consciously or unconsciously starts to think that he is Krishna and he can indulge in these activities that Krishna did in Vrindavana. That is why Prabhupada and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, Bhaktivinod Thakur made it very clear that everybody in this movement has to follow the four regulative principles, no compromise. that is the safeguard, the preventive measure from falling down or becoming a sahajiya. If one follows the four regulative principles, we are protecting ourselves. Then we can serve Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and in due course it will happen.

Q. Are the residents of Vrindavan feeling that they are lacking anything?

No, they are perfectly content, but the point is that those who had become exposed to the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and through that became exposed to Krishna’s Vrindavana pastimes, even when they go to Vaikuntha, they will not be satisfied. The residents of Vaikuntha are satisfied. They do not have any discontentment, but those who have become exposed to Vrindavana pastimes, they will not be satisfied. That is the point.

Q. What is the remedy?

The remedy has been explained by Sanatana Goswami in Brhad Bhagavatamrita. He is showing the journey of a cowherd boy back to Vrindavana. This particular boy, he goes all the way up to Dwaraka. There he is having the association of Krishna, but still his heart is not content. Still there is some dissatisfaction. One day, Narada Muni saw him and said, “What is the matter? You are in Dwaraka. You are receiving the mercy of the Lord. Why are you still not fully content? He started to say, “Actually my heart is yearning for a young boy that tends cows in the forest at the bank of the river and plays the flute.” Started to describe and then Narada Muni told him that your attachment is to Vrindavana. He advised, “You go back to earthly Vrindavana, Bhauma Vrindavana. There you perform sankirtan.” According to Narada Muni’s advice, he came down to Vrindavana and he started to perform sankirtana calling out to Krishna with all the love of his heart. As a result of that, he was elevated to Goloka Vrindavana. The remedy is that. Even from Dwaraka one will have to come down to this Vrindavana and perform sankirtan. Sankirtana actually means calling out to the Lord with all the love of one’s heart. By performing sankirtana, which Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu actually gave, one will become eligible to be elevated to spiritual Vrindavana.

Question : If one attains Raga bhakti, how will we worship Lord Chaitanya?

Worship of Lord Chaitanya originally takes place in the form of Sankirtana: Yajnaih sankirtana prayair yajanti hi sumedhasah, or, sankirtana yajne kore Krsna aradhana. Through Sankirtana, in this age, Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu is worshipped. Ultimately, it is through this Sankirtana, which is calling out to the Lord with all the love of the heart. By doing that, one will begin to see that this Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is actually Radha and Krishna. They will see Radha-Krishna through Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. On that stage, the worship will take place through Gaura-Gadadhara worship, Radharani as Gadadhara and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Gaura-Nitai worship is in Vaidhi Bhakti and Gaura-Gadadhara worship is in raga bhakti. The way Gadadhara is seeing is the way Radharani is seeing Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The question arises, Krishna assumed the mood and complexion of Radharani and came as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and then Radharani also wanted to watch what happens. Therefore She came as Gadadhara. As Gadadhara, She is actually watching Krishna assume the mood of Srimati Radharani.

Q. Did you say that worship of Gaura-Nitai is in Vaikuntha?

No, in Vaidhi bhakti. You see, when we are worshipping through vaidhi bhakti, following the rules and regulations, one worships Gaura-Nityananda. When Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is worshiped in Raga Bhakti, as Pankajanghri prabhu asked, then the worship is in Raga Bhakti. That worship is done by very advanced devotees. Bhaktivinode Thakur had his Gaura-Gadadhara Deities. Some of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's associates also worshipped Gaura-Gadadhara.

Q. How can we enter into Vrindavan by worshipping Chaitanya Mahaprabhu?

When we are approaching Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, what are we actually doing? It is not that we are getting stuck with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Through Chaitanya Mahaprabhu we are getting to see Radha-Krishna through Vrindavana. When we approach Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is saying, "Worship that Radha-Krishna." He is not saying, "Worship Me." He is saying, "Worship Radha and Krishna." Through that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu we are getting to know the real identity of Krishna in Vrindavana and His pastimes in Vrindavan.

These pastimes of Krishna in Vrindavana were not revealed until Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came. Even the Gaudiya Vaishnavas could not really understand. Many of them thought that these were secondary pastimes. They thought that Krishna is a secondary incarnation of Kshirodakasayi Vishnu. Some even considered that these pastimes are immoral or obscene. Only when Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came, through His teachings we got to know. If we consider the history, then we will see that before Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Radha-Krishna's identity was not actually revealed.

And for us, we can say that before Srila Prabhupada, this understanding was not clear. So when we approach Srila Prabhupada, what do we see? Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings: Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, His abode is Vrindavana, and the way the gopis of Vrindavana served Him is the highest.

Q. In Vrindavana there is no understanding of Krishna as God, how can we enter that understanding?

In Vrindavana, we do not become one of those principle gopis that Krishna is directly dealing with or one of those principle cowherd boys or Nanda Maharaja or Mother Yasoda. We simply become their servants and watch the fun. We do not indulge in the pastimes of Krishna ourselves. We simply assist them. That is our position. We do not accept that Krishna is going to come and embrace us. We see how Krishna is dealing with those intimate associates and embracing them or His very funny and loving exchanges with them. Just by watching that or assisting them we will derive our pleasure. Yes, we have the understanding, but at the same time, there, we derive a great joy from seeing how they are dealing with Krishna. That is the meaning of being subordinate to a resident of Vrindavana. That is the way of entering Vrindavana. The understanding will be there with us and therefore we will have great fun watching how they deal with Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Mother Yasoda is, with a rope in her hand and a stick in the other hand, chasing Krishna. We know what she is doing, that she is chasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as if a little child, is running, as if He is afraid of His mother to get away from her. When she catches Him, He starts to cry. What a great performance! That is meaning of Lila, pastimes. The last point is that why it is so important for us to follow the four regulative principles while practicing the process of Raganuga Bhakti. Therefore Prabhupada did not want to make any compromise with these four regulative principles.