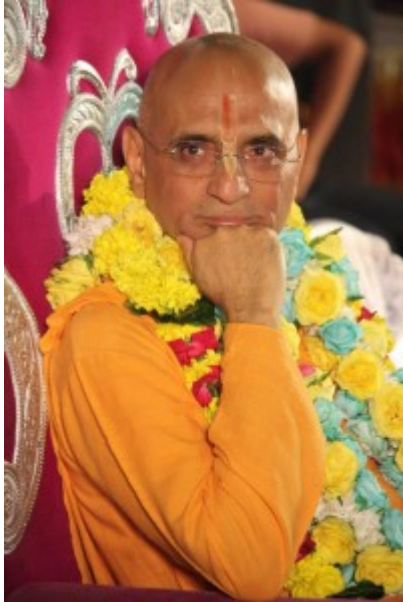


The History Of Vaishnava Heritage Part 6

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



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Today I will try to make the class a little more interesting by telling a story. I will get into the story of Brhad Bhagavatamrita. This is a book by Sanatana Goswami. In a way, this is the summary of Srimad Bhagavatam. What has been taught in Srimad Bhagavatam, Sanatana Goswami is presenting that through a story. First, Brhad Bhagavatamrita is presented in two parts, the initial part and the latter part. Literally it means the eastern and northern parts. The initial part describes Narada Muni's search for the greatest devotee.

Before getting into that story, I would like to briefly discuss the condition of India when Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to spread Krishna consciousness. It is very interesting to note that when Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to spread Krishna consciousness in India, practically the whole of India was under Muslim domination. India had been the target for many foreign attacks but no one actually succeeded in entering India before for thousands of years. Only about a thousand years ago the Muslim invaders succeeded in entering into India. Srila Prabhupada very expertly pointed out that it happened because India lost the Vedic culture. When the people in India were practicing the Vedic culture, India was not only the most prosperous country in the world, but the most powerful country in the world. As Kali Yuga entered and India started to deviate from Vedic culture, India lost its power.

Today we can see that since India has practically rejected the Vedic culture, in spite of having everything, India is considered one of the poorest countries in the world. Actually, India is

not a poor country. In natural resources and human resources India is very wealthy one of the richest countries in the world. But India today has become one of the poorest countries in the world because India has rejected the Vedic culture. This indicates that when people practice Vedic culture, they will become very prosperous and powerful, but when they reject Vedic culture, they lose all good qualities.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu obviously descends with a purpose and the time and place He selects also has its relevance. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in the age of Kali with a specific purpose. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in the land of India with a specific purpose. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in this particular part of India with a specific purpose. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu selected a time when this country was completely taken over by a group of people who were extremely inimical to Vedic culture.

In fact, when the Muslims came to India, they deliberately started to do things which were completely contradictory to Vedic culture. To give an example, in Vedic culture, the kshatriyas keep moustache and they shave their beard. The Muslims started to shave their moustache and keep their beard. In Vedic culture, one keeps a sikha. They started to keep a tuft of hair at the front of their head. In Vedic culture, the cow is considered to be an asset and worshipable as the mother, but the Muslims came and started to kill the cows. It is not that the Muslim religion promotes cow killing. To begin with, where the Muslim religion actually flourished, in the Middle East, there, no one had cows. And if one had a cow, he was considered a very rich man. So obviously, in that culture, there was no question of killing a cow. I heard that in the beginning of the Quran, there is a chapter called Sura-al-bakar, purely in glorification of the cow. So the religion that Mohammed propounded did not allow cow killing, but the Muslims, when they invaded India, started to kill cows. Killing the cows became their religion.

These anti-vedic invaders took over the entire India and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu actually descended at a time like that. At that time, Bengal was ruled by tyrannical king Hussein Shah. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared at that time. It was a time when the Hindus, especially the Brahmins, were tortured to death. The female members of their families were tortured in front of the male members in order to force them to convert. In such a situation, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu descended and He selected a time like that to teach us that this Krishna consciousness movement will flourish irrespective of any material conditions. Even if we are in the worst material condition, we should not become disheartened. Even if we are facing opposition, we should have implicit faith in Krishna. We should have implicit faith in Chaitanya Mahaprabhu that if we follow this process, Krishna consciousness movement will spread. In order to instill that faith in us, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Himself appeared in such a difficult time.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu started spreading Krishna consciousness directly after He got initiated by Isvara Puri in Gaya. Mahaprabhu stayed in Bengal for a few years after that. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu started to preach very, very effectively and He stood up against the Muslim rulers. In this area, the district magistrate was Chand Kazi. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu stood up against him when Chand Kazi tried to stop the sankirtan movement. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu started His civil disobedience movement. Chand Kazi was so scared that he submitted himself to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. then Chaitanya Mahaprabhu converted some very very powerful when were very very degraded, like Jagai and Madhai. In this way, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu created a tidal wave of spiritual uprising.

Then, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu took sannyasa, left home, and went to Jagannath Puri. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu instructed Nityananda Prabhu to spread Krishna consciousness in Bengal. He instructed the Goswamis, especially Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami to go to Vrindavana and retrieve the lost places of Krishna's pastimes and write scriptures to establish the eternal religion of the living entity, sanatana dharma. To establish the teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Goswamis wrote their literatures. Of them, six are most prominent: Rupa Goswami, Sanatan Goswami, Raghunatha Dasa Goswami, Raghunatha Bhatta Goswami, Gopala Bhatta Goswami and Sri Jiva Goswami.

Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami received instructions directly from Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. They were actually very elevated. They were holding some very responsible positions in the Muslim King's court. Sanatana Goswami was the Prime minister of Hussein Shah and Rupa Goswami was the Finance Minister. But as soon as they came in contact with Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, they lost all interest in their respectable ministerial positions.

Rupa Goswami was the first one to leave. Then Sanatana Goswami also quit his job and they went to Vrindavana. When they went to Vrindavana, they were actually leading a very humble and simple life. They were practically maintaining themselves by begging. In those days, Vrindavana was just a forest. The places of Krishna's pastimes were lost from human eyes. That is why Chaitanya Mahaprabhu actually asked Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami to retrieve those places.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu also Himself re-discovered Syama Kunda and Radha Kunda. They were just a paddy field with knee-deep water in some parts. They were practically lost and filled up with mud. Five thousand years is a long time. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu indicated that these were the two places of Krishna and Radharani's pastimes, the pond that was very dear to Srimati Radharani. It is said that the water of Radha Kund is not actually water, it is the liquid love of Srimati Radharani. And Syama Kunda is the place where all the places of pilgrimage have appeared.

The Goswamis wrote volumes of literatures. Out of them, the prominent ones are: Rupa Goswami wrote Bhakti Rasamrta Sindhu, Ujjvala Nilamani, Lalita Madhava, Vidagdha Madhava, these are his famous writings. Sanatana Goswami's well-known writings are Hari Bhakti Vilasa, Brhad Bhagavatamrta.

Today we will discuss about the Brhad Bhagavatamrta. Jiva Goswami was a prolific writer. He wrote Sat-sandarbha, the six sandarbhas. Sandarbhas means philosophical treatise. Then he wrote Gopala Champu. That is a very beautiful writing describing Krishna's pastimes in a very profound way. Today we will discuss the first part of Brhad Bhagavatamrta. This book is very interesting because just by understanding it, we can get the perfect understanding of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings. Srila Sanatana Goswami, in the first part of Brihad Bhagavatamrita, is describing Narada Muni's search for a pure devotee. All the saintly persons were in Prayaga. Narada Muni was there also and they all were addressing each other as the greatest devotee and glorifying each other. So, Narada Muni decided to find out who is actually the greatest devotee.

At that time, Narada Muni came across a wealthy Brahmana who was very sincerely serving the Lord. Narada Muni was so impressed by seeing the Brahmana that he just went to him and started glorifying him as the greatest devotee of the Lord and the recipient of the greatest mercy of the Lord. When the Brahmana heard that, he said, "No, No, I am not the greatest

devotee, I am only trying to become a devotee. The real devotee is such and such king in South India. You go there and you will see what a great personality he is.”

Narada Muni went there and found that it was true. This king, although he had so many responsibilities, was completely absorbed. All of his activities were centered around glorifying and serving the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The brahmana told him, “You see, I am a brahmana, so my occupation is actually to serve the Lord, so there is nothing great about it. But this king, although he is a kshatriya,, see how wonderfully he is serving the Lord.” That was his reason for identifying the king as the greatest devotee.

So Narada Muni went and started to glorify the king as the greatest devotee of the Lord. The king said, “Look, I am just an ordinary, mortal, human being. What is my ability to serve Krishna? Actually, it is Indra, the king of heaven, who is the greatest devotee of the Lord. He is such a great devotee that the Lord Himself appeared as his younger brother and receives his worship and offerings personally with His own hands.

Narada Muni went to the heavenly planets and started to glorify Indra as the greatest devotee. Indra started to lament, “You are calling me the greatest devotee, but you don’t know how much trouble I cause for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Whenever the demons attack me and I am in distress, I just pray to Him and He comes to reinstate me. Do you remember what happened during His Vrindavana pastimes? I challenged His authority and tried to flood Vrindavana. It was such a great offence, even to think of it I feel so embarrassed that I feel like committing suicide.” In this way, Indra started to lament and he pointed out, “Actually, Brahma is the greatest devotee. Brahma is not only the engineer of this universe and is maintaining the universe, but in one day of Brahma, fourteen Indras like me appear and disappear. So actually, Brahma is the greatest devotee.”

So Narada Muni went to Brahma and started to glorify Brahma as the greatest devotee. Hearing that, Brahma just covered his ears and started to say, “Sri Vishnu, Sri Vishnu, Sri Vishnu. Narada, how many times do I have to tell you not to embarrass me like this?” Narada is Brahma’s son and he told Narada many times that he is not the greatest devotee. Brahma also started to lament how many times he created distress for the Lord. So many times, he gave all kinds of boons to the demons. As a result, the demons created so many difficulties and as a result, the Lord had to come personally to rectify the situation. He said, “Actually, Lord Siva is the greatest devotee.”

Narada Muni then went to Kailash and there he offered obeisances to Lord Siva, addressing him as the greatest devotee. Lord Shiva came to Narada, picked him up from the ground, embraced him, and started to say, “Narada, I am not the greatest devotee of the Lord. The residents of Vaikuntha are the greatest devotees of the Lord because they are the eternal associates of the Lord. You are calling me a great devotee, but consider that I became so puffed up with my elevated position that I think that I am the greatest. I even fight against the Supreme Personality of Godhead, siding with my followers like Banasura. When Krishna went to kill Banasura, I went to fight against Krishna. Krishna brought me back to my senses by not only cutting the arms of Banasura, but also burning my abode, Varanasi. So I had to run away from there.” In this way, Lord Siva started to lament and started to glorify the position of the residents of Vaikuntha, the eternal associates of the Lord. Then Parvati started to explain that among all the residents of Vaikuntha, Lakshmi Devi is the greatest devotee.

When Narada was about to go to Vaikuntha, Lord Shiva stopped him and said, “But still, even greater than the residents of Vaikuntha is Prahlada. Prahlada Maharaja is even greater than the residents of Vaikuntha. He resides in Sutala loka.” Narada Muni went to Prahlada Maharaja. Prahlada Maharaja, when Narada Muni started to glorify him as the greatest devotee, he started to explain in a very humble mood that he is not actually a great devotee. His devotion was just like a child’s attachment to something. He was a little child and he just developed some attachment to Krishna and that was about it. Actually the real devotee was Hanuman. He started to explain that Hanuman had done so much for the Lord. Prahlada Maharaja said that all he had done was display some childish sentiments towards the Lord, but service wise, he did not do anything noticeable. Actually, when he was in distress, the Lord had come to save him so many times, but Hanuman had done so much for the Lord.

Narada Muni went to Hanuman and when he started to describe Hanuman as the greatest devotee, Hanuman started to cry, “Already my heart is afflicted due to separation from the Lord. Why are you inflicting more pain into that heart? If I was a devotee of the Lord, then why did He reject me? I am separated from my Lord. I cannot see Him any more. The real devotees are the Pandavas. The Lord is with them and they are in constant association with the Lord.” In this way, Hanuman started to glorify the Pandavas.

Then Narada Muni went to Hastinapur and met the Pandavas. He started to offer them all words of glorification and worship. The Pandavas started to tell Narada Muni that actually the Yadavas were the greatest devotees. They are the eternal associates of the Lord, the relatives of the Lord. We actually remembered the Lord only when we were in distress. We only took His help. Look at the Yadavas, they were born in the same family and have the constant association with the Lord.”

Narada Muni went to Dwarika. In Dwarika, he went to the Sudharma assembly. There, he started to glorify the Yadavas. The Yadavas then explained to him, “Uddhava is the greatest devotee. He is always with the Lord. The Lord is so close to Uddhava that He consults with him as if Uddhava is His minister. He is such a close friend of the Lord that the Lord sends him on all of the important missions to execute them.” In this way, they all started to glorify Uddhava as the greatest devotee.

So, Narada Muni, with the prospect of meeting Uddhava, became so moved with emotion that he could barely walk. His legs were wobbling. His voice choked. He somehow made his way to the inner chamber of Krishna’s palace. When he spoke to Uddhava, Uddhava said, “Narada Muni, you know, one time, I also had that misconception that I am the greatest devotee of the Lord, but ever since I went to Vrindavana, that misconception has been eradicated. If you really want to see the devotees of the Lord, go to see the residents of Vrindavana. Their love is unique for the Lord.”

At that time, Narada Muni saw that the queens and mother Devaki were feeling very much anxiety. They were talking amongst themselves. Narada Muni got to know that they were in such anxiety because Krishna had a dream of Vraja the night before and since then He became so heart-broken that He covered His whole body with the bed-sheet and He was crying. Although it was quite late in the day, He did not wake up as yet. In this way, they were talking. Then Mother Rohini said, “If Krishna is so much afflicted due to the separation from the residents of Vrindavana, then why doesn’t Krishna go to Vrindavana?”

Rukmini Devi replied, “Actually, Krishna’s heart is always in Vrindavana. During the day time, don’t you know that He is always absent minded, as if, although His body is here, His mind is somewhere else? At night, Krishna actually goes to Vrindavana in His dreams. He starts to call His friends, the cows, Nanda Maharaja, Mother Yasoda, as if He falls asleep and literally goes to Vrindavana and starts to associate with those residents of Vrindavana.

Balarama said, “This is His pretension. If He was really so much in love with the residents of Vrindavana, why is He causing so much pain for them?”

When Balarama said that, Krishna got up and started to cry, “What I would not give to go to Vrindavana!” He started to explain why He could not go to Vrindavana. Saying that, he embraced Balarama and started to cry. Then both of them fainted. When Krishna Balaram fainted, everyone started to cry loudly. From Sudharma assembly, the court, Ugrasena, and all the other members of the assembly came running and asked what happened. Then they started to wonder what to do now that Krishna had fainted.

Then Brahma called Garuda and told him to carry Krishna Balarama to New Vrindavana. An island in the ocean was made by Viswakarma to look just like Vrindavana. Narada Muni also went there. He saw that Balarama and Krishna were carried. Balarama came back to his senses and Brahma suggested that Krishna be dressed as a cowherd boy. So Krishna was dressed as a cowherd boy, a flute was tucked in, a flower was given, He was wearing a yellow dhoti, and a peacock feather on Head. So that place was created to look exactly like Vrindavana and dioramas of all the residents of Vrindavana were there. They were just statues, or Deities. Balaram woke Krishna up, “Krishna, Krishna, wake up, it is getting late.”

Krishna said, “Oh, it is so late. The Sun is already up. I slept so late. Balarama, I had a strange dream last night that I went to a place and became the king there and got married to sixteen thousand queens.”

Balarama said, “Okay, come on, everyone is waiting for you.”

Krishna saw mother Yasoda and mother Yasoda was just standing there. Krishna felt that Mother Yasoda was angry and did not want to talk with Him, so Krishna said, “Mother, are you so angry with Me because I slept until late that you do not want to talk with Me?”

Balaram said, “Come, let’s go.”

When Krishna came across Radharani, He started to address Her as “My dearest.” The way that He started to deal with Radharani, Narada Muni realized that this person is the greatest, the dearest to Krishna.

In this way, through this first part of Brhad Bhagavatamrita, Sanatana Goswami established that of all the devotees, the residents of Vrindavana are the highest and of all the residents of Vrindavana, Srimati Radharani is the greatest recipient of Krishna’s love. Now you can see how Sanatana Goswami presented the essence of Srimad Bhagavatam through this Brhad Bhagavatamrita. He did not just jump to the conclusion but very systematically, Sanatana Goswami pointed out different degrees or different elevations of devotees and ultimately, that Srimati Radharani is the greatest devotee.

The part two describes about the journey of a cowherd boy to Goloka Vrindavana. That we will discuss tomorrow.

Q. Why did Krishna not go back to Vrindavana?

A: Krishna felt that if He went back to Vrindavana then it would be extremely difficult both for Himself as well as for the residents of Vrindavana after such a separation. That is why He preferred not to go to Vrindavana.

Q: Unclear

A: Balaram actually pulled Him because He did not want to give Him a chance to realize that it is not the real Radharani. Of course, Radharani's Deity is also Radharani.

Then, Krishna started to play His flute and the whole creation swooned. Krishna was thinking the ocean was Yamuna and He told Balarama, "How come there is a big city on the other side of Yamuna (seeing Dwarika)? When did that happen? I did not know about that."

Balarama said, "Krishna, come back to your senses. Although you have killed so many demons and your friends, the Pandavas, have been reinstated, the enemies are still going to try to attack the Pandavas."

As soon as Krishna heard that, He screamed and came back to His identity as Krishna of Dwarika and said, "Whoever dares to do anything to my devotees, I will immediately take care. Let's go and I will take care of the demons." In this way, He came back to His Dwarika consciousness.

Another important point about this question is that the Vrajendranandan Krishna never leaves Vrindavan. He is always in Vrindavan. It is only by Krishna's yogamaya that they feel Krishna has left. As a result of that, when they see Krishna in front of them, they feel as if they are dreaming. It is not as if they do not see Krishna. Krishna comes to them, and when they see Him, they deal with Him as if it is real. But then, they feel as if it is a dream. That is how, in Vrindavan, Krishna creates a situation where through separation, love becomes intensified. Through Krishna's pastimes, it becomes quite clear to His devotees that the intensity of feeling in separation is deeper than union. The love becomes even more intensified in separation. Therefore, Krishna creates an illusion where they feel that Krishna has left. That is the reason why they feel that they are married to someone else. They are not married to anyone else. That illusory concept is created to intensify their love for Krishna.

Q: Is this aspect also present in Goloka Vrindavana?

A: In the spiritual world, this feeling is also there that Krishna went away and there is separation. The ultimate consideration is that Jiva Goswami is saying that Krishna, the son of Nanda Maharaja never leaves Vrindavan. He does not step out of Vrindavan at all. The Krishna of Dwarika is another Krishna. That is Vasudeva Krishna. It is an expansion of Krishna, not the original Krishna. This has been established through the fact that when Akrura came to take Krishna, Krishna and Balarama went to take bath and there, Akrura actually saw the four-armed form of Krishna. At that point, Vasudeva Krishna came and got into the chariot and Vrajendra nandana Krishna walked back into the forest. So He did not really leave Vrindavan.

Q: (Unclear)

A: On Krishna's part, Krishna always wants to give protection to His devotees but Krishna's devotees do not want to give any trouble to Krishna. We are the servants, we should serve Him; not that Krishna should come and serve us. That is the feeling of the devotees and that is the loving reciprocation. In this intense love, not only the devotees love and serve Krishna, but Krishna also wants to reciprocate by serving them. But when Krishna does that, the devotees become very embarrassed and they feel very unhappy that they have caused Krishna to do something for them.

Q: Unclear

A: Krishna is arranging everything, but that is the Vaikuntha understanding. In Vrindavan, they do not feel that Krishna is arranging everything. They feel that they are arranging everything. Mother Yasoda feels that unless she feeds Krishna, Krishna will die. This is the difference between Vaikuntha understanding and Vrindavan understanding. In Vrindavan, devotees do not really think that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is arranging everything for everyone.

Q: In Vrindavan, the devotees are feeling bad that way?

A: In general, devotees do feel that way. Although they know that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, still, they want to serve Krishna rather than accepting service from Krishna.

Q: Do the pastimes of Vrindavana end when Krishna goes to Dwaraka since He never went back?

A: That is the apparent understanding, but according to Jiva Goswami, Krishna never left Vrindavana.

Q: But Krishna once went to Dwarika.

A: Let us take it from this view-point: Akrura went and took Krishna away, but actually at the border of Vrindavan and Mathura, Krishna went to take bath in the river. At that point, the Vasudev Krishna, Krishna the son of Vasudeva, came and got back onto the chariot. And Krishna, the son of Nanda Maharaja went back to Vrindavana. From that point onwards, the residents of Vrindavan had a feeling that Krishna has left, but from time to time, Krishna would deal with them. But when Krishna would come, they would feel that it was a dream, that it was not really real.

Q: So we don't know that part?

A: There is some description, for example, in Lalita Madhava. For example, one day, Radharani was feeling great separation from Krishna and she was crying and crying. So Visakha painted a picture of Krishna and held it in front of Radharani. When Radharani saw that picture, she felt that the personality from the picture actually came out and tried to embrace her. When He was trying to embrace, She felt very shy. At that point, the dream broke. That personality disappeared. Then, in this intense separation, She was feeling that it

was pointless for her to be alive. She decided to give up her life. She just sat there with a desire to give up her life. At that point, Visakha told Her, "Radha, please open your eyes and see who is there." When She opened Her eyes, She saw that Krishna was standing in front of Her. But when She saw Krishna standing in front of Her, She thought that She was dreaming. In this way, they cannot figure out when they are seeing real Krishna or when they are dreaming about Krishna or creating a mental image of Krishna. They are always absorbed in thinking about Krishna, in Krishna consciousness. In this way they are never separated from Krishna. Yet, this feeling of separation intensifies their love for Krishna. Ultimately, I would say that it is something that I cannot really explain because I do not understand.