

TRIDANDI GOSWAMI SRI SRIMAD BHAKTIVEDANTA NARAYANA MAHARAJA

WHAT IS THE GAUDIYA SAMPRADAYA?

AN INTERVIEW BY SRIMATI SATYARUPA DEVI DASI

Murwillumbah , Australia.

1.15.2000

[Satyarupa devi dasi is a disciple of Srila Prabhupada. She is attending University to get her PHD in religious study. She asked many important and essential questions about our guru parampara. Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja was so pleased with her that he later requested her to be always on tour with his travelling party.]

[Satyarupa] Can you tell me about the development of Gaudiya Matha, maybe from the time you joined? And can you explain how and why it branched out into different mathas?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] I will tell you all things, beginning from where Gaudiya Matha originally came.

[Satyarupa] You told me in one darsan that the Gaudiya Matha came from Brahma.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] But now I will tell you more. Those who follow Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, especially those who are from a place called Gauda, these devotees are called Gaudiya. There are five Gaudas, and each is between two rivers. The first is Punjab, located between the Sindhu and Yamuna rivers; another is between Ganges and Yamuna. Another is between Ganges and Gundaka, and the fourth is between two other rivers and the fifth is Bengal. Of the five, the prominent Gauda is Bengal.

[Satyarupa] Why?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] Because Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu appeared there. He practiced love and affection for Krsna in parakiya mood. Do you know what is meant by parakiya? It is paramour-love (transcendental unwedded love). In India there are so many sampradayas and they do not know about this; but Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu discovered it from Srimad Bhagavatam.

[Satyarupa] What specific verses are evidence of this in Srimad Bhagavatam?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja]

pati sutanvaya-bhratr bandhavan
 ativilanghya te 'nty acyutagatah
 gati-vidas tavodgita-mohitah
 kitava yositah kas tyajen nisi
 (S.B. 10. 31. 16)

“When Krsna played His flute on the full-moon night, all the gopis left their husbands, children, friends, fathers, mothers, and everything, and they went to Krsna. Their husbands were there at home; and therefore this is parakiya. Although the gopis had husbands, Krsna was their beloved. From the beginning they had no relation with their husbands; Yogamaya arranged it so that their husbands never touched them. She made artificial wives, and the husbands used to be with them. Those who accept this, and who follow the teachings of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, are called Gaudiya.

[Satyarupa] Like the false Sita?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] Yes, something like that. There are so many slokas in Srimad Bhagavatam:

na paraye 'ham niravadya-samyujam
 sva-sadhu-krtyam vibudhayusapi vah
 ya mabhajan durjara-geha-srnkhalah
 samvrscya tad vah pratiytu sadhuna

(S.B.10.32.22)

Krsna is telling the gopis, "I cannot repay you. Your love and affection to Me, and our meetings are so pure and transcendental that I cannot repay you. You have given up your husbands and all other relatives for Me, but I cannot give up anyone. I cannot give up my father and mother. I have so many bhaktas, and I cannot give them up. Therefore I cannot repay you."

The gopis had left their husbands, and therefore this verse is another evidence of parakiya bhava. This understanding was discovered and preached in this world by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Those who follow this idea of Mahaprabhu, under the guidance of Srila Rupa Goswami and Srila Raghunnatha dasa Goswami, are Gaudiya. Those who do not follow are not Gaudiya's, even if they live in that area. Those who maintain this idea that the gopis are parakiya, who want to develop the same mood, and are doing bhajan for that end, are Gaudiyas. Srila Rupa Goswami is Sri Rupa Manjari. He is doing bhajan, externally in the body of Srila Rupa Goswami, and internally as Sri Rupa Manjari. Externally he is chanting and remembering as Srila Rupa Goswami, and internally he is serving in his siddha-deha of Sri Rupa Manjari. He is serving Radha and Krsna conjugal.

This is the idea of Gaudiya, and those who follow this are Gaudiyas. It is coming especially from Sri Madhavendra Puri, then Sri Isvara Puri, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Sri Nityananda, Sri Swarupa Damodara—down to my Gurudeva, Srila Bhaktiprajnana Kesava Goswami Maharaja.

[Satyarupa] But there is a gap there—from Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] No, you should accept everyone in our guru parampara: Srila Rupa Goswami, the Sad (six) Goswamis, and Sri Krsnadas Kaviraja Goswami. Then the three—Sri Syamananda Prabhu, Srila Narottama dasa Thakura and Srila Srivas Acarya. Then afterwards, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, Sri Baladeva Vidyabhusana, Srila Jagannatha dasa Babaji Maharaja and all others. There is no gap. There are so many acaryas.

[Satyarupa] Have you written about this?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] Everything is written. Then Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Srila Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji Maharaja, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura, my Gurudeva and also Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami—your Prabhupada. And then it is coming to us.

How has the guru-parampara become so many? Because it descended from the six Goswamis, then to Krsnadas Kaviraja Goswami, and then to Srila Narottama dasa Thakura. They preached all over Bengal and made so many disciples. It was not by quarreling that their centers manifested everywhere. It is all coming through parampara. Some came from Nityananda Prabhu, some from His wife, Srimati Jahnava Thakurani, and some from Srinivas Acarya, Sri Narottama Dasa Thakura and others. Srila Rupa Goswami never made any formal sisyas (disciples). He made only one sisya—Sri Jiva Goswami. Sri Jiva Goswami also did not make any formal disciples, but he adopted those like Srinivasa, Syamananda and

Narottama dasa, and he taught them all the spiritual truths. From these three came so many groups: Syamananda's group, Narottama dasa Thakura's group, Srinivas Acarya's group, and the group of Vircandra, the son of Jahnava and Nityananda Prabhu. Their branches and sub-branches spread everywhere.

After Baladeva Vidyabhusana, there was a bad time for Gaudiya Vaisnavas. The preaching stopped, and all learned persons lost faith in Gaudiya Vaisnavism. Some developed like the Sahajiyas, doing 'bhajan' by taking others' wives and saying, "This is parakiya bhava". So many bad things mixed in this. Then Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura came and saw that so many amalgamations had come. He therefore began to preach, and when Srila Prabhupada Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakura came, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura told him, "O, preach my books here and there." And he began to do that.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura had so many very qualified disciples. Among them our Guru Maharaja was very prominent; and others were also, like Pujapada Srila Sridhara Maharaja, Srila Bhaktivilasa Tirtha, Srila Sauti Maharaja, Srila Giri Maharaja, Srila Bon Maharaja, Srila Vikaras Bharti Maharaja, Srila Madhava Maharaja, Srila Siddhanta Maharaja—so many. And they established their mathas here and there.

After Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura there was a person named Ananta Vasudeva prabhu. He was very qualified, but he became charmed by a lady devotee and left his sannyasa. They married and after that all became against him and said, "Now you should enter family life. This behavior is like that of a dog who eats something and again vomits it." At that time he was very powerful. He had money and so many disciples, and he began to torture his god-brothers, the disciples of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura, who opposed him.

[Satyarupa] What was the cause of the friction?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] It came about because he was attracted to his own lady-disciple and married her. Everyone told him that in Srimad Bhagavatam and other scriptures it is written that such behavior is not a good thing for Vaisnavism. They therefore said, "You should go with her; and you should vacate your position as acarya." Everyone turned against him. He was at that time very wealthy, and he had a great deal of power. His godbrothers therefore left his place and established their mathas here and there.

So there are many sections, and everyone besides him is in the parampara. All are like one. Sometimes they meet together and have discussions. They also meet here and there wherever there is an utsava (festival). Their preaching centers are in different places, but they are of the same opinion.

[Satyarupa] Was the falling of Ananta Vasudeva Krsna's arrangement so that the Gaudiya Matha will grow more?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] Yes, that is right. We can reconcile it in this way. Otherwise we could not have preached all over the world.

I know that we are all in one family, and the family master is Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu who taught that we should all serve Radha and Krsna. Though our preaching centers are in different places, we are in one family. I also think that you are in our family.

[Satyarupa] I think so too. We are all one family.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] Any more questions? Are you satisfied?

[Satyarupa] Yes, I have many questions. Can I ask you a personal question? How do you deal with the antagonism? How are you responding to some of the Iskcon leaders being against you?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] I am very happy. I know that they are my children. Srila Swami Maharaja has told me to save them, and I know that they are ignorant. I want to help them in all ways. Little children may make some disturbance, but the mother or father does not take offense. I always try to help them and I am very happy. I know that they are my children. They may do anything to me, and I never take any offense. I am happy that I am helping you. I want to help everyone—including those who have left. I have relation with so many who fell down. They are coming to me and I am happy. I know that they are like my younger brothers and sister, my sons and daughters. I never feel anything when some persons say things against me. They make so much bad propaganda, but I feel no disturbance. I become happy that by this propaganda I will preach more.

[Satyarupa] Can you tell something about your initiation?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] My initiation is like that of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, like that of my Gurudeva, and like that of Srila Swamiji—the same.

[Satyarupa] What does your initiation mean to you? What is the intrinsic meaning?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] Initiation means the giving of a thick relation, a special relation with Krsna, and the realization of 'who am I'. Regarding the word 'diksa' in sanskrit: in 'di', divya-jnana (the realization of ones transcendental relationship with Krsna) comes: 'I am an eternal servant of Krsna.' But there must be some deeper meaning of 'eternal servant'. In the line of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Srila Rupa Goswami there are five kinds of relations with Krsna. To give any of these relationships—this is initiation. Initiation is not given in a moment or in a day. We admit the devotee in the 'school' of diksa, and it may take so much time to realize all these things.

[Satyarupa] I heard that Srila Bhakti Pramod Puri Maharaja said that the person who is designated by the guru to perform his samadhi is his successor. Is that true?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] It is not necessarily true, but Srila Swamiji Maharaja told me to give him samadhi, and I did it. He had so much faith in me. I am not his uttara adhikari (successor). Actually I am. Those who are falling down are his successors outwardly, but spiritually and transcendently I am his successor.

But you should also understand that any very high class of devotee may not be present at the time of giving samadhi. He may actually be a more elevated disciple, and he may be the successor, no harm; but anyone else can give samadhi. Srila Swamiji told me to do it, but it may be that another acarya has not told his successor, "You should give me samadhi". Has Srila Puri Maharaja himself told? I don't know that he has told like this.

[Satyarupa] I want to know if this is true or not.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] I think it is not true. His successor is Bodhayana Maharaja, who is a good devotee, very humble and polite. But at the time the samadhi was given, he was not there. He was in another country. Others gave it. My godbrothers came, and others came, and they all gave samadhi. Then, after some time, Bhodayana Maharaja came; there is no harm in that. It is not siddhanta that he who gives samadhi will be the successor. So many devotees came from Devananda Gaudiya Matha, and others also came to give samadhi to Srila Bhakti Pramoda Puri Maharaja. But they will not be the successor. His successor will be his own disciple in whom he has belief, and to whom he has told.

Usually the guru never tells who will be his successor. Srila Swamiji never told. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada never told who will be his successor. He knew that, “Someone will come who is very near and dear to me, and who knows all siddhanta.” No one can ever make anyone Guru by appointment. His own qualities will make him Guru.

[Satyarupa] Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaja did not nominate a successor. So how did it come about that Ananta Vasudeva became his successor?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] It is not the transcendental line, that anyone can make someone else a guru. It may be that if one is so qualified, Gurudeva selects him and says, “After me you will be successor”. This is one line. The more essential and prominent line, however, is that anyone serving Gurudeva totally, preaching so much in his line after his departure, and making his Gurudeva very prominent, he is successor. He will preach the same line. Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura never told my Gurudeva, “You should be my successor”. Never. But he became so, as did Srila Swami Maharaja. My Gurudeva never appointed me; yet I became so I am preaching all over the world, and so many are accepting me. So it depends on quality. Srila Prabhupada was not made by anyone, and he became prominent all over the world. Ramanuja was not made acarya. Do you know Ramanuja? He took sannyasa himself, and Madhvacarya also did this. He was not given sannyasa by anyone else. So we should follow this thought. Who made Srila Sukadeva Goswami acarya? Sri Vyasadeva never said, “You are my successor”. Krsna will arrange that those who do bhakti will be acarya.

Srila Swamiji knew what were their qualifications—that they may fall down, they may give him poison or so many things. So he never declared anyone as his successor.

[Satyarupa] When the time comes that you must depart, in what way would you like to see things continue?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] I know the system from the beginning. No one made Sri Narada Rsi acarya. He who manifests very good qualities, and who serves his Gurudeva—he is acarya. I am not worried about this. If I will see someone, I will select. Otherwise, without being selected they will become acaryas themselves, by their qualities, and all are bound to obey them. We know that Srila Rupa Goswami is our complete root acarya, and he never initiated anyone. Still, all accept him.

[Satyarupa] So we can get siksa from Srila Rupa Goswami?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] Yes. This is the eternal line. No one ever knew that I will preach all over the world, and glorify my guru, and the whole paramapara, and this parakiya mood. But Krsna can do anything, even from any dry straw. So I am unqualified, but still my Gurudeva accepted me; all accepted me as acarya. I never thought, “I am acarya.” Never. I have no such abhiman (self-conception). I am not acarya, but all are telling me that I am. What to do?

[Satyarupa] How do you feel about the Australian devotees? What are your feelings about them? What is your experience and how do you feel the preaching is growing here?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] I know that in all preaching the root is Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja Prabhupada. Only by his mercy is everyone preaching. When I preach, all know that, “Oh, he is in line of Srila Swamiji; he is preaching in his line.” Everywhere in the world, except in India, Swamiji did this; being one hand of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakura. He also did it in India, but in India there were others as well.

I know that everywhere there are so many disciples of various sections—like Govinda Maharaja, myself, Srila Puri Maharaja, Srila Bhakti Ballabha Tirtha Maharaja. All are making disciples, but I think we are in one family. Now I see however, that so many sections don't like each other. They fight among themselves, and also with others. They even fight with their wives and divorce them. And some disciples can divorce their Guru also. But we don't like that. We should try to help each other.

There is some envy. The disciples of certain gurus never come to me. They fear somewhat, but I don't fear. I know that they are in one family and they should come. They are fearing that, "Oh, when he will come, he will take all my disciples and attract them." But really I don't want to do that. I want to help all, as a siksa-guru helps. They should understand this, and they should not quarrel; otherwise this preaching will come to some harm.

We should think in this way: "He can help my disciples, and I should help his disciples." During Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's time there was no division like this—that he should come and he should not come. All used to come to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu; all used to come to Srila Rupa Goswami. I want it to be like that.

Though I know that sometimes disciples may be weak and give up bhakti, I want to help them so that again they can serve. And I am doing that. I am again calling those who left, and I am giving them inspiration to serve their Gurudeva. I am helping without consideration of caste or creed.

[Satyarupa] Why is this fear here? Why is there fear?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] Because of ignorance. In Vaisnavism there should be no envy. That is why, although Iskcon is very big, there is a lack of harmony among the members. They don't give honor to their elders, and elders are not giving all their love and affection to juniors. We should try. Otherwise a dark age will come again, and everything will be ruined. I think that if I was not here, going here and there, then sahajya groups who think, "Oh, we are Caitanyaites," would increase. I want a revolution like this: we should come to the real path, in the real sense. Krsna will arrange for anyone to come after me; and after that anyone else will come, and this will not be ruined. The world will be ruined, but this is eternal. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has said that this line is eternal. Someone from any group will come.

[Satyarupa] You mentioned that Ramanuja took sannyasa by himself.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] Himself. Ramanujacarya wanted to take sannyasa and preach our bhakti cult. Before he arrived at the feet of his Guru, however, his Guru passed away. All of his disciples were taking him on a palinquin, to give him samadhi. Ramanujacarya met them on the way and asked, "Where are you going and whom are you carrying on the palinquin?" They replied, "He is Jamunacarya and he has passed away from this world". Ramanuja requested, "Stop here. I want to see Gurudeva. When they set down the palinquin, he asked, "Why are his three fingers closed?" It is a general rule that when someone takes birth his fingers are closed, and when he passes away his fingers are open. Seeing the closed fingers Ramanuja was surprised "Why are these fingers in an unnatural way?" All were surprised, and told him, "None of us had seen this before". Then Ramanujacarya said, "I shall take sannyasa right now". The first finger opened and became straight. Then he said, "I shall compose a commentary on Vedanta Sutra". The second finger opened and became straight. Then he said, "O Gurudeva I will preach your mission everywhere. I will preach all over India, distribute my books, and defeat the mayavada philosophy". When the last finger became straight, Ramanujacarya proclaimed, "My Gurudeva is not dead. He is still here. He is in Samadhi". The disciples told him, "You should give him Samadhi". Ramanuja took sannyasa there, at that time, and then the disciples took him to give samadhi. After this Ramanujacarya went to the temple of Sri Rangam and served all his elder godbrothers for 12 years.

He served some for one month, some for two months, some three months, four month etc. And he received blessings and all knowledge from all of them. After this he became acarya. (Ramanujacarya was so qualified. He wanted to teach the whole world that an advanced devotee is not proud.)