

Guru is One, Guru is Absolute

Quote: "In other words, all the pure gurus in the disciplic line of Srila Rupa Gosvami, in their spiritually perfected forms, are gopi maidservants of Srimati Radhika." [Srila Gurudeva, Guru-devatatma, p.21]

Introduction

Krishna Balaram preachers have asserted that Srila Gurudeva concealed the truth about Srila Prabhupada's svarupa from Srila Prabhupada's disciples. Members of Srila Gurudeva's sanga (including myself) oppose this, because we accept Srila Gurudeva as absolute authority, and we cannot accept that he lied to us and cheated us, for whatever purpose.

Krishna Balaram preachers maintain that, since various elevated devotees have opined that Srila Prabhupada is in sakhya-rasa, our Srila Gurudeva could not possibly think otherwise. Consequently, there must be some deeper reason why Srila Gurudeva said Srila Prabhupada is in madhurya-rasa. The Krishna Balaram preachers have themselves relinquished their absolute view of Srila Gurudeva in this respect; they have accepted a relative view of his authority (without his authority to do so); they have concocted their own explanation of Srila Gurudeva's statements about Srila Prabhupada; and they have stated strongly that it is childish to continue to accept the literal truth of Srila Gurudeva's words. This has deeply upset a large number of Srila Gurudeva's disciples, who consider that the arguments that Krishna Balarama preachers have provided contradict clear statements in shastra, and are in many cases less than flimsy.

The ideal is to reconcile apparent contradictions.

Mature and responsible devotees see that we need a scenario that resolves the apparent contradictions without defaming Srila Prabhupada, Srila Gurudeva and BV Madhusudana Maharaja, or diminishing their stature. There is a simple solution, which keeps intact the essential values of both parties; and that is to recognize that there are in fact parallel realities, each of them valid in their own way.

From the point of view of Krishna Balaram preachers:

1. BV Madhusudana Maharaja must be correct in saying that Srila Prabhupada is in sakhya-rasa.

From my point of view (and I am not alone in putting these points forward):

1. Srila Gurudeva as absolute.
2. Srila Gurudeva cannot have lied to us and deceived us.
3. Srila Prabhupada as acarya is in madhurya-rasa, which does not exclude his being in, or manifesting, other rasas as well.

To resolve the apparent impasse, we need to show that:

- (1) It is possible for Srila Prabhupada to be in different rasas.
- (2) Srila Gurudeva could have expressed a realization or opinion that differed from that of seniors, without violating Vaishnava etiquette.
- (3) Srila Prabhupada could have revealed to Srila Gurudeva an aspect of himself that he did not reveal to other personalities.

There is a simple and natural way of doing this very simply, to resolve the commotion and disturbance in Srila Gurudeva's sanga.

The arguments of the Krishna Balaram preachers

Here is a summary of the arguments of the Krishna Balaram preachers.

[Big quote marks]

On the one hand, there is no reason to oppose the idea that Srila Prabhupada is a priya-narma-sakha, because they are also very close to Radha-Krishna, and are almost as intimate as the gopis. In one recent paper Krishna Balaram preachers stated that priya-narma-sakhas are in madhurya-rasa and are rupanuga.

On the other hand, Srila Gurudeva's statements that Srila Prabhupada is a manjari cannot be factually true. This is because:

- (a) Srila Prabhupada appeared to BV Madhusudana Maharaja and told him that he is sakhya-rasa.

(b) Other senior Vaishnavas have also made similar statements about Srila Prabhupada.

(c) Srila Gurudeva could not possibly contradict his seniors: "... someone so attached to Vaisnava etiquette as he was CANNOT CROSS THE WORDS OF HIS GURU-VARGA, HIS WORSHIPABLE SUPERIORS..."

(d) Therefore, "HE HAD A SPECIFIC TACTIC HE NEEDED TO USE TO FULFILL HIS SPECIFIC MISSION."

(e) The specific mission was to help Srila Prabhupada's disciples on the path of raga-bhakti. But they would not have accepted that Srila Gurudeva was in a higher rasa than Srila Prabhupada, so he had to deceive them. Further, Srila Gurudeva could not tolerate seeing Srila Prabhupada as being outside the manjari group.

[End of big quote marks]

These arguments depend on the following assumptions:

1. Disciples may on occasion take a relative view of their Gurudeva.
2. Gurudeva lied to his followers over a period of many years for a specific purpose.
3. Permanent rasa is fixed, and one is either in one rasa or another; no one can manifest two distinct rasas.
4. There are different gurus, and if their opinions differ from each other, one of them must be "right" and the other "wrong".
5. Srila Gurudeva could not have presented realizations that differed from those of senior Vaishnavas.
6. Srila Prabhupada could not have revealed to Srila Gurudeva something that he did not reveal to others.

We may respond to these assumptions with the following principles:

Principle 1: Guru is Absolute

Sri Krishna is the Absolute Truth, and Sri Guru is non-different from Him (sakshad haritva). Therefore Guru is absolute, and we accept him as absolute authority, otherwise we have no link with Krishna. If someone not absolute, he is not Guru. If someone does not accept Guru as absolute, he is not disciple.

Srila BR Sridhara Maharaja writes: "Although to his godbrothers a guru will be seen in a relative position, to his disciple the guru is absolute." Hence, to interpret the words of Gurudeva on the strength of someone else's statement is to step out of the role of disciple, and into another role. Srila Sridhara Maharaja has also stated: "So, the absolute and relative principles are always clashing. They will seem to fight with one another, but the absolute should be accepted and the relative should be sacrificed." Therefore, where there is an apparent contradiction in the instructions of the guru, it is the first duty of the disciple to reconcile contradictions, to avoid "having to take" a relative view of Guru. This may seem difficult, but, as Srila Prabhupada has written, "it is quite possible for the Absolute to reconcile all opposing elements."

Srila Gurudeva himself did not authorize his disciples to take a relative view; on the contrary, he emphasized strong following and exclusive shelter: "There is no possibility of attaining bhakti if we do not totally follow our gurudeva." "If a guru is bona fide and you have some doubt in his character or teachings, Krishna will never accept you." [Gurudevataatma, pp.10, 21] He liked to tell the story of Upamanyu who obeyed his guru totally when he was looking after his cows. Both Srila Gurudeva and Srila Prabhupada are ideal examples of total following with faith.

It follows, therefore, that Srila Gurudeva's representatives are duty bound to follow this principle, and to encourage and help his disciples to follow the principles of total following as well. There is a way of doing this. It is in accordance with Vaishnava principles, and the counter arguments are not strong.

The Krishna Balaram preachers have written: "Gurudeva may be our Gurudeva and we therefore see him as an absolute authority, but someone so attached to Vaisnava etiquette as he was CANNOT CROSS THE WORDS OF HIS GURU-VARGA, HIS WORSHIPABLE SUPERIORS". Here the statement "Gurudeva may be our Gurudeva and we therefore see him as an absolute

authority, but..." is semantically incorrect. If we see Gurudeva as an absolute authority, then we cannot use the words "may" and "but". The author argues that, since Srila Gurudeva cannot contradict his seniors, the author cannot accept his instructions literally. This is a relative view of Gurudeva. It is permissible if and only if we have Srila Gurudeva's absolute authority to take a relative view of his instructions on occasion.

The Krishna Balaram party have not given any evidence that Srila Gurudeva has ever given his absolute authority to take a relative view of his instructions under any circumstance. This means that they themselves have crossed the words of their worshipable Gurudeva, which according to them is an invalid procedure. Their argument invalidates itself.

Principle 2: Gurudeva is Truth and he is truthful.

Krishna is the Absolute Truth, and Guru is sakshad-harivta. Guru is Absolute, and disciple accepts him as such. One who is not absolute is not Guru, and who does not accept Guru as absolute is not disciple. For me, Srila Prabhupada is the personification of Truth, who came to save me. Srila Gurudeva gave me my understanding and realisation of Srila Prabhupada, so he is also the personification of Truth.

Bhudhara Prabhu once asked Srila Gurudeva if he deliberately gave instructions that were not factual. Srila Gurudeva replied, "No, I mean what I say."

The KB preachers say that Srila Gurudeva lied to Srila Prabhupada's disciples to attract them to raga-bhakti, but how can a lie help anyone to approach spontaneous service to the Absolute Truth? Srila Gurudeva has instructed some of Prabhupada's disciples, "He is your guru-sakhi." How can that help their raga-bhakti, if Srila Prabhupada is in sakhya-rasa? Where is the precedent for this? This is all completely unauthorized fiction.

Truthfulness is the last leg of religion, so how can an acarya blatantly lie? Srila Prabhupada did not tell his disciples we fell from Goloka. In one letter he wrote: " Yes, the conditioned souls are parts and parcels of the Lord and thus they were with Krsna before being conditioned. Just as the child must have seen his father because the father places the child in the womb of the mother, similarly each soul has seen Krsna or the Supreme Father. But at that time the conditioned souls are resting in the condition called susupti which is exactly deep sleep without dream, or anesthetized state, therefore they do not remember being with Krsna when they wake up in the material world and become engaged in material affairs." [Letter to Jagadisa, 25 April, 1970] Srila Prabhupada's books, his conclusive evidence, make it clear that we did not fall from Goloka: "Therefore it is to be understood that when Jaya and Vijaya descended to this material world, they came because there was something to be done for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Otherwise it is a fact that no one falls from Vaikuntha." (See also, for example, SB 4.28.53, purport, where Srila Prabhupada makes it clear that we did not come from the spiritual world.)

Principle 3: A transcendental personality may manifest two distinct rasas.

It is certainly possible for Srila Prabhupada to manifest different rasas in different circumstances. For one thing, madhurya-rasa contains all the other rasas, and they can manifest in madhurya-rasa as sancari-bhavas. In Jaiva-dharma, Babaji Maharaja appeared to Brajanath as "the personification of Subala", and to Vijaya Kumar as "as the personification of Sri Lalita-devi." Thus it is perfectly reasonable to say that Srila Prabhupada could be in madhura-rasa, and could still manifest sakhya-rasa in some of his writing, and in his dealings with particular people, for whatever reason. His manifesting madhura-rasa to Srila Gurudeva, and sakhya-rasa in other situations would not be in any way contradictory.

Another point is that one person appearing in pastimes on the earth planet may be a manifestation of different personalities at one and the same time. Furthermore, those different personalities may be in different rasas. For example, we read in Sri Gaura-Ganodesa-dipika "[B]oth Karttikeya and Acyuta-gopi were present in the body of Acyutananda."(88) In verse 181, we read that Sri Sanatana Goswami is Lavanga-manjari (also known as Rati-manjari) and, that Sanatana Kumara (generally accepted to be in santa-rasa) also entered the body of Sanatana Gosvami. In verses 122-124, we read: "The most learned devotees say that Ramananda Raya is the incarnation of both the Pandava

Arjuna, and a gopi named Arjuniya. This explanation is also supported by the statements of the Padma Purana, Uttara-khanda."

Of course, we also understand that Ramananda Raya is Vishakha-devi. Yet we find the following statement in Caitanya-caritamrita (Antya 6.9): "Previously, when Lord Krsna was personally present, Subala, one of His cowherd boyfriends, gave Him happiness when He felt separation from Radharani. Similarly, Ramananda Raya helped give happiness to Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu." In CC Adi 1.46, Srila Prabhupada writes, "the spiritual master is always considered either one of the confidential associates of Srimati Radharani or a manifested representation of Srila Nityananda Prabhu." Diksha-guru is krsna-rupa (Nityananda-prakasha) and shiksha-guru is krsna-svarupa (radha-palya-dasi), and one guru frequently takes on both roles.

When Srila Prabhupada wrote his much-quoted prayer in mid-Atlantic, he was meditating on the mission of his Guru Maharaja to spread Krishna consciousness everywhere. He was in his mood as Nityananda-prakasha, so it was natural for him to manifest his sakhya-rasa mood in some verses. However, in the refrain for every verse, which gives the underlying, background mood, he instructs Krishna to surrender to Srimati Radhika to get her blessings. This is a special mood of Her group of gopis.

Transcendental rasa is not so simple that we can reduce it to black-and-white, either-or statements. In one way or another, it is quite possible for Srila Prabhupada to be in more than one rasa simultaneously, or to reveal different aspects of himself in different rasas. How can conditioned souls think that they can fathom all the aspects of the service moods of such a unique acarya as Srila Prabhupada? The KB thesis that Srila Prabhupada can only have been in sakhya-rasa has no foundation.

Principle 4: Guru is One

Srila Prabhupada said, in his address to devotees in 1936, "There does not arise any question of discriminating my guru from yours or anyone else's. There is only one guru, who appears in an infinity of forms to teach you, me, and all others. Therefore, if the Absolute Truth is one, about which we think there is no difference of opinion, the guru also cannot be two." Suppose we find an apparent discrepancy between what "one guru" says and what "another guru" says. We have to understand that Srila Prabhupada is Guru and Srila Gurudeva is Guru and BV Madhusudana Maharaja is Guru. Guru is speaking through all of them. It is the task of the sincere and mature devotee is to protect the sanctity and stature of Guru. It is immature and sectarian to think that "one or other of two gurus" is correct, and "the other guru" must in some way be incorrect. This is an unauthorized, material conception.

Principle 5: Srila Gurudeva is brilliantly authentic and also brilliantly independent.

Our acaryas in general follow their predecessors, but there are many examples of innovation. Of course, we must follow the principle of formal respect (maryada), but there is no absolute principle that a guru has to follow previous or senior gurus in all respects. On the contrary, if a devotee has a higher realization, then it is reasonable and necessary to express it. In fact, most of our acaryas differ in some way from their predecessors. Srila Madhavendra Puri manifested Vraja moods that were unknown in our line before him. Srila Rupa Goswami and the other Goswamis wrote about manjari-bhava, which was not openly manifested before; it is not mentioned in Srimad-Bhagavatam, nor did Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu teach it openly. Srila Jiva Goswami taught svakiya-rasa, which was not what Srila Rupa Goswami taught. Srila Sarasvati Prabhupada went to Calcutta to preach after his Guru Maharaja told him not to go there. Our Srila Prabhupada required 16 rounds a day, rather than 64, and made many new adjustments. He was not at all submissive to his senior Godbrothers; on the contrary, he did not hesitate to instruct them, and speak strongly against them on occasion. Our Gurudeva had his especial brand of vraja-bhakti, which was not previously preached openly and publicly to all. At times, he defended his presentation and mood strongly in arguments with his senior Godbrother, Pujiyapada BV Trivikrama Maharaja.

Srila Gurudeva has not contradicted anyone. He has mercifully expressed his higher realization of Srila Prabhupada's spiritual nature. That is not contradiction. If it were contradiction, then we have

to condemn Madhavendra Puripada for "crossing his guru-varga" by manifesting vraja-bhava. Sri Rupa Goswami would also be at fault for "crossing his guru-varga" by revealing manjari-bhava. Srila Gurudeva is the ideal and perfect guru. He is also independent, and he could and did express extraordinary and unprecedented insights and realizations.

Here is an example of Srila Gurudeva contradicting his guru-varga.

In Jaiva-dharma (2nd edition, p. 397), Srila Bhaktivinode Thakura explains that Krishna has free will and the intrinsic quality of being the predominating enjoyer. In this sense He is distinct from the brahma of the Upanishads, which is devoid of desires. However, on one occasion, Srila Gurudeva asserted that without Srimati Radhika, Krishna is impersonal Brahman. Prema Prayojana asked him about this, and he replied, "You will have reconcile this." Some years later, I asked him how we could reconcile the contradiction, and he repeated his assertion. He explained that desire is also a kind of energy, and ended up saying, "You will have to understand my mood."

Here is another example.

In Sri Gaura-Gannodesa-dipika (124), we read "Ramananda Raya is the incarnation of Lalita-gopi, Arjuniya-gopi, and Pandava Arjuna." However, both Srila Prabhupada and Srila Gurudeva assert that Ramananda raya is the incarnation of Vishakha-devi, and that it is Svarupa Damodara who is the incarnation of Lalita-devi.

Here is an example of Srila Gurudeva contradicting shastra.

Once, during Purusottama month in Puri, some devotees pointed out that shastra states that Purusottama month is higher even than the month of Karttika. Srila Gurudeva then glorified Purusottama month with all sastric references and realizations. At the end, he contradicted the shastric conclusion by saying, "Karttika month is so much higher. Purusottama month is Krsna, and Karttika is Srimati Radhika. She is so much more glorious than Krsna. Only by the grace of Srimati Radhika is the true glory of Purusottama Krsna known. Her devotion is the light by which Krsna's beauty shines, which in itself makes Radhika more resplendent. In the same way, Her month of Karttika illuminates the glories of this Purusottama month, which in return only stands to highlight the magnificence of Karttika even more."

In both of these examples, Srila Gurudeva is manifesting even more enthusiasm for Sri Radha than in the original sources.

There is no reason to state categorically that he could not have expressed an idea or realization that is different from that of his seniors.

Principle 5: Srila Prabhupada could have revealed to Srila Gurudeva something that he did not reveal to others.

Srila Prabhupada could certainly have revealed to Srila Gurudeva something that he did not reveal to the other personalities involved in the discussion, because they had a unique relationship.

It was Srila Gurudeva who provoked Paramagurudeva to demand that Srila Prabhupada took sannyasa.

It was Srila Gurudeva who served Srila Prabhupada while he was in America and he was the only one who met him in Delhi when he came back the first time.

It was to Srila Gurudeva that Srila Prabhupada wrote, "Our relationship is based on spontaneous love, like mine for my Guru Maharaja. When I met him that was the first time that I knew what is love."

It was Srila Gurudeva who was the only Gaudiya Matha devotee ready to take prasada from Srila Prabhupada's disciples when he came back.

It was Srila Gurudeva who pacified Srila Prabhupada in his last hours with the gopi-mantra.

It was Srila Gurudeva who was the last person to talk with Srila Prabhupada.

It was Srila Gurudeva who put Srila Prabhupada in samadhi *smile emoticon* equal consciousness) although there were Godbrothers present.

Which mantras would Srila Prabhupada have wanted on his body if we were in sakhya-rasa? Did he give Srila Gurudeva any instructions about that? No.

So if Srila Gurudeva had such a uniquely close relationship with Srila Prabhupada, why could Srila Prabhupada not reveal something to him that he did not reveal to others?

Conclusion

In order to validate Srila Prabhupada's revelation to BV Madhusudana Maharaja, the KB preachers have tried to invalidate Srila Gurudeva's statements that Srila Prabhupada is in madhurya-rasa. This is absolutely unnecessary, because we can reconcile the statements of Srila Gurudeva and other authorities naturally, according to Vaishnava principles. Further, the arguments of the KB preachers are weak and contrived, and they contradict factual shastric statements about rasa. Since Guru is Truth, we must understand and accept that there must be parallel realities in which Srila Prabhupada may manifest sakhya-rasa in some circumstances, and madhurya-rasa in other circumstances. This is in accordance with Vaishnava principles, and the opposite view is contrary to Vaishnava principles.

(1) Srila Prabhupada may manifest different rasas from a position in madhurya-rasa; or else his manifest being may be composed of distinct transcendental personalities in different rasas. On the one hand, Srila Prabhupada may have appeared to BV Madhusudana Maharaja in sakhya-rasa either (a) as one aspect of madhurya-rasa or (b) as one particular transcendental personality present in Srila Prabhupada's being. It is not contradictory to say that he can also appear to Srila Gurudeva in madhurya-rasa either (a) as his full svarupa or (b) as another transcendental personality who is also present in Srila Prabhupada's being.

(2) In this case, there is no contradiction if Srila Gurudeva's realization of Srila Prabhupada's spiritual form is different from the realization or understanding of others. There is no reason to think that Srila Gurudeva transgressed etiquette by expressing his own realization, so there is no fault on his part.

(3) Srila Gurudeva had a uniquely close relationship with Srila Prabhupada, and it is perfectly reasonable to think that Srila Prabhupada may have revealed to him an aspect of himself that he did not reveal to others.

There is then no reason for the Krishna Balaram group to violate Srila Gurudeva's authority, or to invite Srila Gurudeva's disciples to do so, or to deride them if they do not do so.

If we accept this scenario, there is no need for any disagreement between the groups.

These are the natural consequences if the Krishna Balaram party refuses to accept a reasonable solution.

If Krishna Balaram preachers refuse to reconcile, then they are themselves overstepping the words of their Gurudeva without authority. Then their own diagnosis applies to them: "... CANNOT CROSS THE WORDS OF HIS GURU-VARGA, HIS WORSHIPABLE SUPERIORS UNLESS HE HAD A SPECIFIC TACTIC HE NEEDED TO USE TO FULFILL HIS SPECIFIC MISSION."

The "SPECIFIC MISSION", as we all know, is to show that BV Madhusudana Maharaja is correct in his statement that Srila Prabhupada revealed to him that he is sakhya-rasa, and the "SPECIFIC TACTIC" is to validate this revelation by asserting that Srila Gurudeva knowingly concealed the truth from us, and told us something that was not true.

If the Krishna Balaram party refuse to accept a reasonable reconciliation and settlement, and do not retract their statements which have compromised the status of Guru-tattva, then we have to act as directed by their quoted authority Srila Sridhara Maharaja: "We need society only to help us. If our affinity to the society keeps us down, then that should be given up, and we must march on. There is the absolute consideration and the relative consideration. When they come into clash the relative must be given up, and the absolute should be accepted. If my inner voice, my spiritual conscience, decides that this sort of company cannot really help me, then I will be under painful necessity to give them up, and to run towards my destination, wherever my spiritual conscience guides me."

It is essential that we, as aspiring sincere devotees of our Gurudeva, maintain our absolute view of his instructions and personality. (We will also have to learn how to do that without fanaticism.) If we have to avoid the association of those who unlawfully violate this principle, so be it.

