

Sectarianism – Party Spirit and the Śrī Gaurāṅga Samāja

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Where all Vaisnavas can be Accommodated

If we want to be part of the non-sectarian mission of Mahāprabhu and Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura then there are a few points that we need to consider. Firstly Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura himself said: “...excommunicating people is not the answer...” especially if they do not agree with us. He also wrote in his *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*, the real Śrī Gaurāṅga Samāja, the real association of the devotees of Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu is where all Vaisnavas can be accommodated.

The True Śrī Gaurāṅga Samāja

“...Previously, we explained that a society of Śrī Gaurāṅga that does not accommodate all types of Vaiṣṇavas will be short lived. That said, the fact is that a society founded with *viśuddha-vaiṣṇavas*, or pure devotees on the transcendental platform, as members is to be regarded as the true Śrī Gaurāṅga Samāja.

“...Among the various Vaiṣṇavas in such a congregation, the *viśuddha-vaiṣṇavas* are immersed in the bliss of *bhajana*, and are mostly inactive in developing their worldly life. Until those who have an inclination for *bhajana* become specifically immersed in the bliss of *bhajana* they can engage in activities to advance their worldly life.

“...However, if they do not get the association of Vaiṣṇavas who are immersed in the bliss of *bhajana*, they will become completely materialistic within no time. For such people, it is nothing but self-deception to establish and promote themselves as representing the society of Śrī Gaurāṅga, without associating with *śuddha-vaiṣṇavas*...” (Śrī *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta* by Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura)

A Few Men of India

In 1887, in his *Śrī Sajjana-toṣaṇī** Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura wrote, “...Mahāprabhu did not come for a few men of India...” “...He came for one and all irrespective of caste, creed, gender, colour etc...” It is a fact that Mahāprabhu’s mercy is for one and all. There is no question of my group, my temple, my *saṅga*. If we only see our own little group then that will cause the ass-like mentality not the swanlike mentality. Legislation of religion and institutionalism has never worked, but is used to oppress an already oppressed people or race.

*Śrīla Bhaktivinoda started *Śrī Sajjana-toṣaṇī*, a unique monthly journal that continued through seventeen volumes.

Sectarianism

Then in the *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā** Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura writes:

*sampradāya-virodho 'yam
dāvānalo vicinityate*

“...The eleventh obstacle of the Vaiṣṇavas is sectarianism, which takes the shape of the forest fire. Due to sectarianism a person cannot accept anyone outside of his own group as a Vaiṣṇava, and as a result he faces many obstacles in finding a *guru* and associating with devotees (*sādhu-saṅga*). Therefore extinguishing the forest fire is most important...” (SKS. Chapter 8 verse 22)

*Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā by Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura is a summary of the glories of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

That Great Enemy of the Truth

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura also wrote in *The Bhāgavata: Its Philosophy, Its Ethics, and Its Theology*, on page 10, “...Party spirit - that great enemy of the truth - will always baffle the attempt of the inquirer who tries to gather truth from the religious works of his nation and will make him believe that the Absolute Truth is nowhere except in his old religious book...”

The Bona Fide Spiritual Teacher

In the Harmonist Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda writes:

“...The idea of an organised church in an intelligible form, indeed, marks the close of the living spiritual movement. The great ecclesiastical establishments are the dikes and dams to retain the current that cannot be held by any such contrivances. They, indeed, indicate a desire on the part of the masses to exploit a spiritual movement for their own purpose. They also unmistakably indicate the end of the absolute and unconventional guidance of the bona fide spiritual teacher. The people of this world understand preventive systems; they can have no idea of the unprevented positive eternal life. Neither can there be any earthly contrivance for the permanent preservation of the life eternal on this mundane plane on the popular scale...” (*The Harmonist* 29.7)

All the Branches of the Tree

In the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja Goswami writes:

*vande śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-
premāmara-taroḥ priyān
śākhā-rūpān bhakta-gaṇān
kṛṣṇa-prema-phala-pradān*

“I offer my obeisances to all the dear devotees of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the eternal tree of love of Godhead. I offer my respects to all the branches of the tree, the devotees of the Lord who distribute the fruit of love of Kṛṣṇa.” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 10.7)

In the purport to this verse Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda has written: “... Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī therefore offers equal respect to all the preachers of

the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who are compared to the branches of the tree. *ISKCON is one of these branches*, and it should therefore be respected by all sincere devotees of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu...” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 10.7 purport)

The Mercy of Mahāprabhu

From the above statements there seems to be a recurring line of thought that we are not sectarianists nor party spirited. No one has the trade mark™ or copyright© on the mercy of Mahāprabhu. After all Mahāprabhu is:

*namo mahā-vadānyāya
kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-
nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*

“O most munificent incarnation! You are Kṛṣṇa Himself appearing as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. You have assumed the golden colour of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and You are widely distributing pure love of Kṛṣṇa. We offer our respectful obeisances unto You.” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.53)

Mahāprabhu gave *prema* indiscriminately, to one and all. He is *adbhuta-audārya* wonderfully magnanimous; *adbhuta-kāruṇya*: wonderfully merciful; *adbhuta-vadānya*: wonderfully munificent.

*yo 'jñāna-mattam bhuvanam dayālor
ullāghayann apy akarot pramattam
sva-prema-sampat-sudhayādbhuteham
śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanyam amum prapadye*

“We offer our respectful obeisances unto that merciful Supreme Personality of Godhead who has converted all three worlds, which were maddened by ignorance, and saved them from their diseased condition by making them mad with the nectar from the treasure-house of love of God. Let us take full shelter of that Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, whose activities are wonderful.” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.54)

PURPORT

This verse is found in the Govinda-līlāmṛta (1.2).

Amongst Uttama-Adhikārīs There is no Trace of Sectarianism

Then in his Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura writes:

“...Sectarianism is a natural byproduct of the Absolute Truth. When *ācāryas* first ascertain and instruct the Truth, it is not polluted with sectarianism. But the rules and regulations received through disciplic succession regarding the goal and the method of achieving it are

changed in due course of time according to the mentality and locale of the people. A rule that is followed by one society is not necessarily accepted in another society. That is why one community is different from another. As a community gradually develops more respect for its own standards, it develops hatred towards other communities and considers their standards inferior. These sectarian symptoms are seen in all countries since time immemorial. This is prominent amongst neophytes and found to some extent amongst *madhyama-adhikārīs*. Amongst *uttama-adhikārīs*, however, there is no trace of sectarianism...”

“...Due to these differences there is disagreement, cessation of social intercourse, and fighting, even up to the point of killing one another. When an ass-like mentality becomes prominent within the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs*, then they certainly indulge in these things. But if they develop a swanlike mentality, then they do not take part in quarrels, rather, they endeavour to attain a higher level. *Madhyama-adhikārīs* do not quarrel so much about external standards, but they are always attacked by philosophical disagreements. Sometimes they condemn the standards of neophytes and establish their own standards as superior...”

“...Contradictions actually arise only due to ass-like mentality. Swanlike persons consider the necessity for different practices according to one’s qualification, so they naturally become detached from sectarian quarrels. In this regard, it should be known that both asslike and swanlike people are found amongst the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs* and *madhyama-adhikārīs*...”

“...But swanlike Vaiṣṇavas are nonsectarian and, therefore, rare...”

Aspire for the Association of Swanlike Personalities

So from the above quoted information, if we see the following taking place,

1. The ass-like mentality.
2. There is disagreement, cessation of social intercourse, and fighting, even up to the point of killing one another.
3. Party spirit.
4. Sectarianism.
5. Excommunication, due to differences or the ass-like mentality.
6. Where all Vaisnavas cannot be accommodated.

We can understand this is the ass-like mentality not the swanlike mentality, and that it is not the true Śrī Gaurāṅga Samāja, the association of the devotees of Mahāprabhu, it is something else – the opposite. It is not our position to excommunicate anyone from the spiritual master’s mission or movement or branch of the *sampradāya*.

If we Fight on Account of Diversity

“...This is called unity in diversity. I am therefore suggesting that all our men meet in Māyāpura every year during the birth anniversary of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. With all GBC and senior men present we should discuss how to make unity in diversity. But, if we fight on account of diversity, then it is simply the material platform. Please try to maintain

the philosophy of unity in diversity. That will make our movement successful...”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda letter Bombay 18 October, 1973)

We should aspire for the association of swanlike personalities, and aspire for the swanlike mentality. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura was definitely the non-sectarian *ācārya*. He also wrote wonderfully on natural brotherhood:

Natural Brotherhood

“...Gradually, when the offensive portions of the established religions are destroyed, there will be no more differences in the *bhajana* performed by the various *Sampradāyas* nor any quarrel between them.

Then as brothers, the people of all castes and countries will spontaneously chant the Holy Names of the Supreme Lord together.

At that time, no one will hate anyone or consider others dog eaters; nor will anyone be overwhelmed by the pride of high birth.

The living entities will not forget the principle of natural brotherhood...”

Religious Unity of the World

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura predicted that a time would come when we all come together; the sooner this happens the better, for us as individuals and for planet earth!

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta has written in *Bhaktivinoda-vāṇī-vaibhava*, Chapter Six, Part Six, “...In a short time, there will be only one *sampradāya*, or devotional line. That will be the Brahma-sampradāya. All the other *sampradāyas* will find their conclusions in the Brahma-sampradāya...”

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda wrote an article called ‘Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda’, which was about a prediction from his very great father. This article was published in the Harmonist Magazine:

“...Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda has predicted the consummation of religious unity of the world by the appearance of the only universal church which bears the eternal designation of the Brahma-sampradāya. He has given mankind the blessed assurance that all Theistic churches will shortly merge in the one eternal spiritual community by the grace of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. The spiritual community is not circumscribed by the conditions of time and space, race and nationality. Mankind had been looking forward to this far-off Divine Event through the Long Ages. Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda has made the conception available in its practicable spiritual form to the open-minded empiricist who is prepared to undergo the process of enlightenment. The keystone of the Arch has been laid, which will afford the

needed shelter to all awakened animation under its ample encircling arms. Those who would thoughtlessly allow their hollow pride of race, pseudo-knowledge or pseudo-virtue to stand in the way of this long hoped for consummation, would have to thank only themselves for not being incorporated in the spiritual society of all pure souls...”

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī Offers Respect to Those Who Distribute the Fruit of Love of Kṛṣṇa - Prema-Phala

Let us not forget we are all part of the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya and this *sampradāya* has many branches. “... Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī therefore offers equal respect to all the preachers of the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who are compared to the branches of the tree...”

*vande śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-
premāmara-taroḥ priyān
śākhā-rūpān bhakta-gaṇān
kṛṣṇa-prema-phala-pradān*

“I offer my obeisance’s to all the dear devotees of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the eternal tree of love of Godhead. I offer my respects to all the branches of the tree, the devotees of the Lord who distribute the fruit of love of Kṛṣṇa [*prema-phala*].” (SCC. *Ādi-līlā* 10.7)

We must therefore offer our *daṇḍavat-prāṇam* to all swan-like *premi-bhaktas* who are the preachers of the *prema-tattva*, the truth of Love of God, of Mahāprabhu irrespective of caste, creed, gender, colour or group affiliation, as they are our source of inspiration.

The Swanlike Prema-Bhaktas

Then at the end *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Samhitā*, Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura Mahāśaya writes:

“...The swanlike *prema-bhaktas* are worshipping examples for all devotees even though they act like a farmer amongst farmers, a businessman amongst businessmen, a servant amongst servants, a general amongst soldiers, a husband with his wife, a parent with his child, a wife with her husband, a child with its parents, a brother with his brothers, a chastiser with the criminals, a king with his subjects, a subject with his king, a thoughtful person amongst the learned, a doctor with his patient, or a patient with his doctor. By the mercy of the pure devotees, we are constantly desiring with undeviating attention the shelter of the lotus feet of the divine couple, who is their only wealth.

“...O *prema-bhakta mahājanas*! Please shower the rain of your mercy, in the form of your association, and moisten our hard heart, which is attached to argument and crushed by material enjoyment. Let the wonderful transcendental truth of the divine couple, who are the Absolute Truth without a second, be reflected in our purified and melted heart...” (From the *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Samhitā*, Conclusion by Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura Mahāśaya.)

Thus we should aspire for the swanlike mentality and give up the ass-like mentality. The doors of the mission are open to one and all. We should open our hearts and

minds and allow Mahāprabhu to take his seat within, thus paving the way for the *prema-nāma* to resound in our hearts.