

Respected Maharaja's, Prabhus and Didis,

Dandavat pranams. Jaya Sri Sri Guru and Gauranga.

Just recently you received a transcription of Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja's parikrama class, which he gave at the Tota Gopinatha Mandira in Puri. Coincidentally, Srimati Krsna Kamini devi dasi just found an old cassette tape of an intimate darsana given by Srila Maharaja on the same topic - with more detail. Many of the points made in that 1993 darsana were also spoken this year in Puri in Hindi, but not previously translated into English. The more one understands the relationship of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Tota Gopinatha, and Sri Gadadhara Pandita prabhu, the more he understands about everything else in Bhakti. The transcription of the 1993 darsana is therefore submitted herein:

SRI GADADHARA PANDITA AND TOTA GOPINATHA

A discussion with Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja at the Tota Gopinatha Mandir

Jagannatha Puri: September, 1993

When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu lived in the cave at Gambhira, He was always thinking of Krsna and weeping. He came to taste Radha-bhava, and His activities while in Gambira comprise one drop of the ocean He experienced. While living in Gambira He gave the Deity of Gopinatha to Srila Gadadhara Pandita and told him, "Today I will give a very good thing. Will you accept it?"

Srila Gadadhara Pandita replied, "Yes, why not? I'll keep it on my head."

In the mood of Radhika, Mahaprabhu began to search here and there in the sand. All of a sudden He touched the mukut (crown) of Gopinatha and told the others, "Take out the sand." He then placed Gopinatha in the lap of Gadadhara Pandita and said, "You should never leave Him."

Srila Gadadhara Pandita built a hut there, and Mahaprabhu used to come daily to take darsana of Gopinatha. Whenever He went to Jagannatha Mandira and saw Subhadra and Baladeva, He did not experience very much pleasure. Rather, in front of Baladeva and His sister Subhadra He felt very shy and thought, "I have come to Kuruksetra." He was in the mood of Srimati Radhika at Kuruksetra where, in great separation, She tried to bring Krsna (Jagannatha) to Vrndavana. In the mood of Srimati Radhika, Mahaprabhu did not like to see Krsna in Kuruksetra because all His associates, along with all His queens of Dvaraka, were there, and so many horses and elephants were there. There was no chance for Radhika to be with Him in private, and this is why Mahaprabhu always felt so much separation in Puri. In this way, being in Gambhira was like being in Vrndavana and feeling separation for Krsna in Dvaraka.

The mood of separation was always present in Mahaprabhu in Puri. When Radhika went to Kuruksetra, She did not take rest with Krsna. Rather, She was given a separate accommodation in a tent, and Krsna lived with the Yadavas and His queens. When He went to His own accommodation, She felt great separation.

In Puri, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu sometimes saw the sea as Yamuna and jumped in it, but there He wept still more because Krsna would disappear. Sometimes He became like a tortoise, His limbs drawn into His body, and sometimes the joints of His hands and legs would become separated by eight inches, remaining connected only by skin. At that time He sometimes appeared like a ghost. When the devotees would see Him in that condition, they would all become fearful and begin to weep for Him. All this was due to separation from Krsna, and therefore, to get some relief, Mahaprabhu would come to Gopinatha. Seeing Gopinatha He felt, "Oh, I have come to Vrndavana. My pranatha is here." In this way His tears of separation would subside.

On one side of Gopinatha we see Srimati Radhika, on the other side Lalita, and both are black like Krsna. Being in the mood of Radhika, when Mahaprabhu used to see Gopinatha He (She) became one in mood with Krsna and became black. Radha becomes black by seeing Her Pranatha and becoming absorbed in Him. She sometimes takes the flute of Krsna and begins to play it, and in this way also, She becomes black. In the mood of Srimati Radhika, Krsna becomes Mahaprabhu, and Lalita becomes Sri Svarupa Damodara. This is the mood of Tota Gopinatha with Radhika and Lalita.

You can see that Gopinatha is sometimes standing and sometimes sitting. Although you do not see any other vigraha sitting, He sits. Some say that when Srila Gadadhara Pandita became old, he could no longer offer garlands to Gopinatha, and therefore Gopinatha sat down. But this is not actually the reason. Caitanya Mahaprabhu disappeared at the age of 48, and Gadadhara Pandita was only one year younger. He left this world a year after Mahaprabhu disappeared, and thus there was no chance for him to become old. When Mahaprabhu disappeared, following the order of Mahaprabhu, he did not leave the worship of Gopinatha. Always feeling separation, he quickly became lean and thin and could not even stand to give a garland to Gopinatha. Seeing Gadadhara Pandita in such a state, Gopinatha sat down for him, and Gadadhara Pandita continued to offer the garlands along with his tears.

There was a bhakta of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu named Mamu Thakura who used to render various services to Him. Soon after Mahaprabhu disappeared, Srila Gadadhara Pandita also disappeared, and at that time his disciple Mamu Thakura was appointed by the government of Puri to serve Gopinatha. He was old—about 84 years—and he could not properly offer garlands to Gopinatha. Some say that perhaps because Mamu Thakura could not give garlands to Gopinatha in his old age, Gopinatha sat down for him. Actually, however, Gopinatha sat for Srimati Radhika. It is a common thing for Srimati Radhika that Krsna stands up and sits down for Her.

[Question:] Some people say these Deities are Lalita and Radhika, and some say they are Lalita and Visakha. Are both opinions correct according to their own moods?

[Srila Maharaja:] On Gopinatha's left side is Srimati Radhika and on His right is Srimati Lalita devi. As Gadadhara Pandita, Srimati Radhika was always watching Krsna, in the form of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, to see whether or not He was correctly playing Her role. In this way, it is Srimati Radhika who is there with Tota Gopinatha.

[Question:] Before coming to Puri, Mahaprabhu knew Svarupa Damodara in His early years in Navadvipa? They were school friends?

[Srila Maharaja:] Both Svarupa Damodara and Gadadhara Pandita, and also Murari Pandita, were with Him. They all grew up together. Jagadananda Pandita, Mukunda, and Vasu Gosh were also His friends from childhood.

[Question:] You have said that of the four dhamas of Mahaprabhu, Navadvipa is considered the best. I could not understand what you said.

[Srila Maharaja:] At first He was in Navadvipa, from childhood up to kisoralila, reading and writing. When He was 24 years old He left His home and came to Jagannatha Puri, and there He gave mercy to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. After that He went to South India, and there He met Raya Ramananda at Godavari. Raya Ramananda saw Him in mahabhava (as Radha) and as Rasika Sekhara (Krsna). He saw Rasaraja Mahabhava, Srimati Radhika and Krsna combined, and he fainted. After that Mahaprabhu returned to Puri and enjoyed the vipralambha-bhava of Srimati Radhika.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu performed His kisoralila in Navadvipa, and therefore Navadvipa is Vrndavana. Srila Narottama dasa Thakura and others have explained that it is non-different from Vrndavana, but they have not said that Jagannatha-ksetra is Vrndavana. Rather, it represents Dvaraka or Kuruksetra. Those who follow Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and do bhajana in Navadvipa will come out in Vrndavana on the bank of the Yamuna at Vamsivat. This has been written and revealed by our acaryas, but they have never said that Jagannatha Puri is Vrndavana. Sri Ksetra means Laksmi Ksetra, where Satyabhama and Rukmini, or Maha Laksmi, reside. If a person leaves his body in Jagannatha Puri, he becomes four-handed, but this is not so in Vrndavana and Navadvipa. There, one will become two handed like the associates of Radha and Krsna. Therefore, Navadvipa is superior to Jagannatha Puri.

[Question:] And the fourth place?

[Srila Maharaja:] The four places are Navadvipa, Puri, Godavari and Vrndavana. Vrndavana and Navadvipa are the same, but they are seen as two. At the time of sadhana, Navadvipa it is seen as Navadvipa, and in the siddha stage it is seen as Vrndavana. In sadhanavasta (the stage of performing sadhana) we will see Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in the form of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, but when we become siddha we will see: "Oh, Radha and Krsna have both become Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu." So both are one.

On the other hand, in the intense separation of divyonmada, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu used to see Puri as Kuruksetra and Dvaraka. As far as Godavari is concerned, it is Mahaprabhu's 'school.' He learned from His siksa-guru, Visakha devi, in the school of Srila Raya Ramananda, and after that He returned to Puri. In Puri, He was always absorbed in Vrndavana.

[Question:] I heard that this part of Puri, Tota Gopinatha, was called Gupta Vrndavana.

[Srila Maharaja:] Mahaprabhu used to see Gopinatha here, and He therefore used to see His place as Vrndavana. But it is not Vrndavana. It is part of Dvaraka and Kuruksetra, and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu used to feel separation here, throughout the entire day and night.

[Question:] Why did Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu not go to Vrndavana first?

[Srila Maharaja:] If He had done so, everybody would have known that He is Krsna. There He will always weep and become mad. He would not be in Radha's mood; He would be in the mood of Krsna. When He would see the cows grazing, the calling peacocks, "Ke ka, ke ka," and the cuckoos calling, "Kuhoo, kuhoo," He will leave that mood of Radhika. He will become Krsna and begin to run everywhere searching for Radha: "O Radhe! Radhe! Radhe!" Because every leaf, tree, creeper, and everything else in Vrndavana calls, "Radhe, Radhe," He would not be able to remain in radha-bhava.

[Question:] You've said that, by bhava, Jagannatha Puri is higher than Navadvipa. I think you said that Navadvipa is first, then Puri, then South India—in order of superiority. But by bhava, Jagannatha Puri is first, then South India and then Navadvipa. Is that correct?

[Srila Maharaja:] No. I explained that here in Puri there is only lamentation in the mood of separation. I said that the acaryas in our disciplic line are associates of Srimati Radhika—as palya-dasi. We want that Srimati Radhika is always cheerful, and She is cheerful when She is with Krsna. We are pleased when Krsna searches Radhika, when Radhika is hidden in a kunja and Krsna is calling, "Where is Radha? Where is Radha? Where is Radha, Lalita, Visakha and the others?" The gopis are so pleased, thinking, "Oh, today He is searching." They are all in a good mood, and Radhika is so joyful. We should always be pleased in that way.

Here in Puri, Radhika is always calling, "O Krsna! O Krsna! O Krsna!" We don't want that. We select as the best place that place where Krsna will search—in a place like Radha-kunda. Krsna approaches Radhika and serves Her feet, and at that time Radhika is proud and enjoys so much. Here in Puri there is no rasa-lila.

[Question:] But in relationship to Mahaprabhu's tasting?

[Srila Maharaja:] Here there is a separation mood; no meeting.

[Question:] You said one time that this was the most important part of everything He showed.

[Srila Maharaja:] It is extremely important. For us, at our stage, the mood of separation is more helpful than meeting. But we want that Srimati Radhika should be always pleased. Here She is always weeping and weeping. We don't want to see Radhika constantly weeping always.

[Question:] But it is Krsna who is weeping, isn't it?

[Srila Maharaja:] But Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is in the mood of Radhika. We consider Vrndavana the best place. It is the where Radhika will place Her feet in the lap of Krsna and He will paint His name on them. Krsna will then keep Her feet on His head and heart, and that fresh color will make stamp-like print on His body. He is always serving Her there, and Radhika will say, "Oh, He loves Me best." We want that; but for sadhana, separation is helpful. Without separation we cannot advance an inch further.

[Question:] Is Jagannatha Puri better for sadhana than Navadvipa?

[Srila Maharaja:] Navadvipa is better in all ways.

[Question:] Does Tota Gopinatha give some special benedictions that other Deities cannot give?

[Srila Maharaja:] Yes, He can give His service. What is the meaning of Gopinatha? Who is Gopinatha?

[Question:] Lord of the gopis. Master of the gopis.

[Srila Maharaja:] No, no; it doesn't mean master. Natha means prana—life. Krsna is the gopis' life. But this is not a name. What is His name? If anyone asks you, "Who are you?" you will generally state a relation between you and someone else. Similarly, there is a relation between Krsna and the gopis, and this relation is very high. Therefore, if you go to Gopinatha, He will give you the benediction that you can serve Him as the gopis serve. You will also be able to serve like them. You will realize that it is Gopinatha who gives this benediction. You cannot realize this at present, but when the time comes, you will realize it.