

THE WAVE OF SAHAJIYAISM

Reflections on the article “Who is following whom?”

By Atul Krsna Dasa

Recently an article entitled “Who is following whom?” by an anonymous disciple of B.G. Narasingha Maharaja was posted on “Krsna Talk” and other websites. This barrage of misinformation may be harmful to many innocent readers. Therefore, with the interests of our vaisnava community in mind, I will briefly point out some of the major defects in this paper.

The paper in question sets the scene with the following statement:

“The followers of Sripad B.V. Narayana Maharaja write that, ‘the highest good can be obtained by anyone who faithfully hears krsna-katha from a bona-fide rasika acarya’ and quote Srila Narottama dasa Thakura, (‘A person averse to hearing these lilas will never attain perfection. I refuse to hear his name’) in an attempt to justify the hearing of confidential lilas by the unqualified.”

Here we see how the author tries to graft together two unrelated statements from the excellent article “Hearing from a Rasika Acarya” by Sripad Dhrstadyumna Das to give the impression that Srila Narayana Maharaja and his genuine followers (quote) “attempt to justify the hearing of confidential lilas by the unqualified.” However, such a conclusion has not been presented anywhere in that paper. The statement that “the highest good can be obtained by anyone who faithfully hears krsna-katha from a bona-fide rasika acarya” is undoubtably true because a bona-fide rasika acarya knows how to present everything according to the qualification of the audience. The statement that “a person who is averse to hearing rasa-lila will never attain perfection,” is also true because it is the statement of Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura. However, the author then makes 2+2=5 by waving his finger and boldly announcing, “Just see how they are attempting to justify the hearing of confidential lilas by the unqualified!”

In this way he insults the readers’ intelligence by incorrectly summarizing the gist of “hearing from a rasika acarya”, and hoping that the reader will not notice. After that sleight of hand, he goes on at great length, slashing and cutting triumphantly at a point that was NEVER MADE. If Sripad Dhrstadyumna Das had actually condoned the hearing of confidential lilas by the unqualified anywhere in his paper then surely B.G. Narasingha Maharaja's disciple could supply us with the quote. Furthermore, even the quote he does present us clearly states “one who FAITHFULLY hears”. Then totally overlooking the content of his own evidence, he attempts to persuade us that this means the followers of Srila Narayana Maharaja advocate the hearing of confidential lilas by the unqualified. Is he suggesting that the words “faithfully” and “unqualified” have the same meaning? Such incoherent and absent-minded writing can only occur as a result of vaisnava aparadha.

Previously B.G. Narasingha Maharaja wrote: “While commenting on this verse [10.33.39] Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura has mentioned that one should first come to the stage of anartha-nivrithi before attempting to hear the rasa-lila topics. It is sometimes taken that sraddha anvatah or full faith means anartha-nivrithi, the stage of being FREE from misconception and unwanted disturbances in the heart.”

Of course Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura never wrote any such thing. This was proven conclusively in “Hearing from a rasika acarya”. (See www.gaudiya.net/articles/contemporary) It seems that a sannyasa disciple of B.G. Narasingha Maharaja became upset over the fact that his guru was categorically wrong. Better to accept that fact with integrity than to shamelessly concoct a classic “straw man” argument to compound the humiliation. What is this straw man argument? X Maharaja has written:

“The followers of B. V. Narayana Maharaja have taken exception to Srila Narasingha Maharaja's statement that one must ‘first come to the stage of anartha-nivrthi’ before hearing rasa-katha.”

It is not that we have taken exception to this statement. We have taken exception to B.G. Narasingha Maharaja’s speculation regarding the teachings of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura. It is quite evident

that the anonymous author of the aforementioned document lost track of the topic of discussion a long time ago. In his original article, B.G. Narasingha Maharaja has attempted to establish his own conclusions in the name of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura. Then later on, a sannyasa disciple of his, after reading the true explanation of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura's statements, INDIRECTLY ADMITS THAT HIS GURU WAS WRONG BY TRYING TO INVALIDATE THOSE STATEMENTS AS IRRELEVANT FOR THE MODERN AGE and claiming that they present a method of sadhana which is different from that propounded by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura!

“Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura's writings must be seen in the context of the time, place and circumstances that he was living in. The genuine followers of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami do not practice the same sadhana that was practiced in the sixteenth century.”

Herein they disclose the root of their inadvertent deviation. Although the tenor of preaching may be adjusted to address the ebb and flow of history, the actual process of sadhana in the line of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu always remains the same and can never change. We invite the author to supply us with the details of this NEW style of sadhana, which is different from the sadhana described by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, and thus also different from the same sadhana described by Srila Rupa Gosvami. The example of non-hindus not receiving Brahma-gayatri is an irrelevant sociological detail, which has absolutely no effect on the main principles of hearing and the qualification to hear. Let us adhere to the subject at hand.

Actually, the commentaries of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura and of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura on the verse “vikriditam vraja vadhubhir... (10.33.39)” express the same idea in different words. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura does not claim that one must be free from all anarthas, rather he stresses that one simply should not neglect the strict practice of sadhana-bhakti, the cultivation of sambandha-jnana, or compare the transcendental lila with mundane affairs.

This definitely leaves us wondering: “Who is following whom?” It appears that the two Maharajas are not able to follow even each other's flows of thoughts. In their earlier document, they quote Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's Sri Caitanya Siksamrtam to establish the conclusion that one should first become purified by hearing the pastimes of Krishna's killing the demons, and in the later, they quote Srila Jiva Gosvami's Krama-sandarbha to establish the conclusion that one should first purify his heart by chanting harinama, realizing Krishna's form, qualities and associates, and only then is one qualified to hear Krishna's pastimes. Certainly the authors of these documents are very competent in making it look like our acaryas contradict each other all the time, leaving behind heaps of confused readers, who wonder whether the authors have a fixed siddhanta at all.

It appears that the anonymous author of the document is quoting from anywhere and everywhere to defeat his opponent, without a serious interest in establishing a solid conclusion. Technically speaking, this is symptomatic of the mode of ignorance. If B.G. Narasingha Maharaja and his followers intend to have a serious discussion on a particular subject matter, it would be helpful if they could stick to the issue at hand. Every time we give a thorough response to their documents, they twist and turn things around, make up facts of their own design, and subtly change the topic of discussion on top of it all.

Just because Sripad Dhrstadyumna Das has shown that one need not be beyond anartha nivrtti to hear rasa-lila katha from the lips of a pure devotee does not mean he is advocating hearing by those who are utterly unqualified, as illogically suggested in the paper under question. Quote: “This verse (Bhag 10.33.39) is often misused on an attempt to justify the hearing by anyone and everyone of the Lord's confidential pastimes.” Sripad Dhrstadyumna Das has thoroughly established the actual qualification required on the basis of the direct explanations of Srila Jiva Gosvami and Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura. So why does the anonymous author try to establish that Sripad Dhrstadyumna das is advocating hearing by the unqualified? Why?

Since the character and activities of Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja are all immaculate and flawless, it is necessary for those who are averse to him to first quickly create a false allegation against him and then enthusiastically present an exhaustive body of evidence from accepted authorities in the hope that the reader will not notice that the original allegation was unfounded. It is such a cheap shot that the author declined to put his name to the paper. This is indicative of a distinct lack of guru-nistha.

Not only that, but the rest of the paper contains not less than another twenty anonymous statements and “some unspecified person allegedly said to another unspecified person etc....” type of anecdotal references. One might rightly ask, “If your case is so strong, then why is all your so called evidence anonymous?” Of course, all the witnesses are so dubious that even though anonymous statements have no credibility, it is better to have no credibility than to be associated with the infamous by citing their statements as evidence.

The unknown author goes to great length to provide us with evidence that one should not discuss the highly confidential astakaliya-lila of Sri Sri Radha-Krsna in a public assembly. However, he does not provide us with a shred of evidence to prove that Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja is actually doing this. If that were the case, then surely it would not be difficult to prove because the lectures of Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja are immediately transcribed and posted on internet and all the classes spoken in English over the past six years or so are easily available to anyone. If we inspect those lectures, what do we find? Mainly practical and repeated explanations of Sri Upadesamrta, Sri Siksastakam, Sri Rupa Siksa, Sri Sanatana Siksa, the opening verses of Ramananda Samvada, the lives of Prahlada Maharaja, Dhruva Maharaja, Ambarisa Maharaja, Bharat Maharaja, Ajamila, Citraketu Maharaja and so on. Sometimes we may find the pastimes of Krsna stealing butter, killing demons or even the separation feelings of Nanda Maharaja, Yasoda Maiya and the gopis when Krsna left Vrindavan. Do we find any discussions of sambhoga-rasa, astakaliya-lila, Sri Govinda-lilamrta and Krsna Bhavanamrta? Then why does the anonymous author rant on about this for more than thirty pages? He challenges:

“The onus is on those differing with this presentation of our acaryas actual inner mood to show where Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Svami Prabhupada, Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Gosvami Maharaja and Srila Bhakti Pramoda Puri Gosvami Maharaja prominently preached rasa-lila to mixed audiences.”

Here the author tirelessly reiterates his false accusation to reinforce the impression that Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja prominently preaches rasa-lila katha to mixed audiences. Where is the evidence? The best he can come up with is:

“In section 4 above, Srila Narayana Maharaja claims that Srila Prabhupada wanted to give this rasa-katha to everyone. This is clearly not the fact.”

Thus the author continues with his tiresome and transparent fault-finding. Any ordinary person will agree that all of our acaryas want to give rasa-katha to everyone (eventually). Simply to state this does not in any way dispose of the recognition of adhikara, as implied by X Maharaja. Such disfunctional statements reveal more about the character of the author than about Gaudiya Siddhanta.

The idea that Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja is not following the mood and conclusions of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura is absurd. The unknown author explains that Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja emphasizes smarana over kirtana in the following statement:

“Srila Sarasvati Thakura emphasized the chanting of the holy name over lila-smarana in order to purify the conditioned soul, whereas Narayana Maharaja stresses the opposite.”

However, nothing could be further from the truth. In his commentary on Sri Bhakti Rasamrta Sindhu Bindhu, Srila Narayana Maharaja writes:

“In Kali-yuga, if another anga of bhakti is performed, it must be accompanied by harinama sankirtana. Srila Sanatana Gosvami has also said that harinama-sankirtana is the foremost among all the angas of bhakti, such as smarana and so on.

manyamahe kirtanam eva sattamam
 lolatmakaika svahrdisphurat smrteh
 vaci svayukte manasi srutau tatha
 divyat paran-apy-upakurvadatvat
 (Bṛhad-Bhagavatamṛtam 2.3.148)

The Lord’s associates in Vaikuntha said: “In our opinion, KIRTANA is superior to SMARANA because remembrance manifests only within the mind, which is by nature unsteady. Kirtana, however, manifests on the tongue and vocal organs and automatically creates an impression on the mind. In the end the sound of kirtana not only satisfies the sense of hearing, but it pleases all those who hear it just as it does for the self. In smarana there is no such power. Therefore kirtana alone is capable of controlling the mind, which is ever more flickering than the wind. Besides, the mind cannot perform smarana without kirtana. Other than kirtana there is no other method by which the mind can be made steady—this is the deep and confidential meaning of this sloka by Srila Sanatana Gosvami.”

(Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, Bhakti Rasamṛta Sindhu Bindu pg.106)

Again we challenge X Maharaja to provide just one shred of evidence to support his accusation that Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja stresses smarana over kirtana. It is utterly astonishing that the author of the aforementioned document has taken so much time to refute the products of his own imagination. Had he ever studied the books and lectures of Srila Narayana Maharaja, which are freely available on the internet, he would have discovered that the teachings of Srila Narayana Maharaja in the world of his mind do not quite correspond with the teachings of Srila Narayana Maharaja in reality.

Instead of being radically different from the teachings of our previous acaryas, like Srila Bhaktiraksaka Sridhara Maharaja, we find that the teachings of Srila Narayana Maharaja are identical with theirs in this regard, as is evident in the two quotes given below:

“Yes, Govinda Lilamṛta is there, with asta-kaliya-lilas, the eight lila of Radha-Govinda. This is for the higher students.” (Srila BR Sridhara Maharaja, Room Conversation, Nov. 12, 1981)

“At our present stage we should not buy or read Govinda-lilamṛta and Krishna-bhavanamṛta. We must first engage in very good sadhana-bhajana and become mature in bhakti. Until then, we don’t require to read these books any more than a three-year-old boy requires a young and beautiful wife.” (Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, lecture, France, June 27, 1997)

We request X Maharaja to kindly explain the critical difference in the moods above, which impels him to accuse Srila Narayana Maharaja of deviating from the line of Srila Prabhupada Sarasvati Thakura. Should this not be convincing enough for the neophyte student on the path of devotion, let it be known that: “Don’t try to follow Kṛṣṇa Bhavanamṛta and Govinda Lilamṛta at once; otherwise you will go to hell.” (Srila Narayana Maharaja, lecture, Eugene, USA, April 29, 2001)

How, then, should we relate with these very confidential pastimes? “Just as our Guru Maharaja, he is very cautious about to deal with the higher rasa, pujala raga-patha gaurava bhange.” (Srila B.R. Sridhara Maharaja, quoted by B.G. Narasingha Maharaja without supplying the reference in article #19 of Krishna-talk) Or, in other words:

“Those who can sing and follow asta-kaliya-lila are very elevated. We only do pranama to these lilas. ... I tell you that you should read First Canto, Second Canto, Third Canto; and after that you should take Tenth Canto. Prabhupada has also told this. I never tell the pastimes of the gopis with Krishna to common people.” (Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, lecture, Wales, July 1, 2000)

The party of B.G. Narasingha Maharaja has made serious allegations to the effect that Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja does not follow the precepts of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. These allegations have been refuted herein. When one finds fault in a faultless person, it is inevitably due to possessing that fault oneself. Thus, although Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura never compromised on the issues of frivolous sports and renounces engaging in business, it is common knowledge that on numerous occasions B.G. Narasingha Maharaja has been spotted surfing (long board and boogieboard) on the North Shore of Oahu and Hawaii. Surfing one day and giving initiation the next – is this following the mood of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura? Could this be the “wave” of sahajiyaism B.G. Narasingha Maharaja keeps going on about? He can send his sannyasa disciples out to sell cookies or engage brahmacaris in making a graphic design business on the internet. Is this the inner mood of Srila Prabhupada Sarasvati Thakura? He can give his sannyasa disciples miniscule South Indian style dandas, completely disregarding the standard set by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. Srila Sarasvati Thakura was not in the habit of taking loans from grhastha vaisnavas to make a business of exporting wooden statues, and then calling a loan a “donation” to avoid paying it back. As stated by B.G. Narasingha Maharaja in his article on Vraja-bhava:

“Those who are actually tasting vraja-bhava cannot tolerate even for a second to engage in ordinary financial dealings simply for the purpose of extending their material facilities.”

In fact, we couldn't have said it better ourselves. Does B.G. Narasingha Maharaja chant 64 rounds, the standard set by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura? Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja has been chanting at least 64, sometimes 128 and sometimes 192 rounds for more than 55 years, that is before B.G. Narasingha Maharaja was born. Even in his household life, before being initiated or even meeting his Gurudeva, Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja would not chant less than 64 rounds daily. So who is following whom?

B.G. Narasingha Maharaja's party claim to be on a mission to quell the wave of sahajiyaism. However, they have embarrassed the line of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura by being publicly defeated in the hands of various sahajiya groups on several occasions. Still, they would do well to attack those who are actually sahajiya and opposed to the mission of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, instead of trying to discredit the very person who has done more to protect the mission of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura and to crush sahajiyavada than anyone else in the world preaching arena today. We refer our readers to Gaudiya Vaisnavism vs. Sahajiyaism and Prabandha Pancakam – “Five Essential Essays” by Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja. These two literatures have silenced all the critics of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. They have established the dignity of the Sarasvat Gaudiya Vaisnava line in the eyes of its adversaries. Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja is famous for publicly and successfully challenging all the sahajiya babajis at Radha-kunda to debate on sastra and the siddhanta presented by Srila Prabhupada. Thus he is the pride of our sampradaya.

The fact of the matter is simply that the mission of B.G. Narasingha Maharaja is failing and has failed all over the world. His disciples are losing faith and taking shelter of Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, whose mission is expanding exponentially. The failure of B.G. Narasingha Maharaja is his own fault and should not be attributed to the preaching of Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja. It would be a source of great delight to see his mission flourish, yet we fear the worst due to his current spate of serious offences.

Vaisnava dasanudas ,

Atul Krsna Dasa

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