

[Srila Narayana Maharaja on Rathayatra in Navadvipa – is it rasabhasa?](#)

The following article is the first reply written by Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja to the objections printed in the journal of Sri Caitanya Sarasvat Matha against holding Ratha-yatra in Sri Navadvipa Dhama

*Sri Bhagavat Patrika, Kartika Agrahayana,
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Sri Ratha-yatra in Sri Dhama Navadvipa Is it contradictory to the conceptions of Rupanuga Bhakti?

Having read the essay entitled 'Sri Rathayatraya Sri Rupanuganucintana' [Ratha-yatra according to the conception of the followers of Srila Rupa Gosvami] published in the first issue, volume 13 of 'Sri Gaudiya Darsan' [the journal of Sri Caitanya Sarasvat Matha], it seems that this article has been printed without showing it to the most honourable editor, Pujyapada Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Maharaja.

In the aforementioned essay, the uninformed author, by the name of Bhakti Kovida Mahodaya, without taking the trouble to research the subject matter, has rashly written the following groundless and imaginative statements:

- 1) *Ratha-yatra is not performed in Sri Vrndavana. Therefore, in Sri Navadvipa Dhama, which is abhinna-vraja mandal (non-different from Vraja), why should this lila be exhibited?*
- 2) *Seeing the ratha (chariot) would stimulate a terribly undesirable apprehension in the hearts of the vraja-gopis. Therefore, how can the rupanuga vaisnavas, who are following the moods of the gopis, join in the Ratha-yatra procession?*
- 3) *From ancient times up until the present day, no great personality who was expert in the performance of bhajana, has ever performed the procession of Ratha-yatra lila in abhinna-vraja mandala, Sri Navadvipa Dhama.*
- 4) *Furthermore, Jagad-guru Om Visnupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Thakur has not performed Ratha-yatra-lila in Sri Gaura-dhama.*
- 5) *In Sri Navadvipa Dhama, how is the darsan of Dvaraka possible or appropriate?*

Therefore, it is against the principles of the followers of Srila Rupa Gosvami to hold the Ratha-yatra procession in Sri Navadvipa Dhama.

It is definitely necessary to analyze these 5 arguments.

1) "One cannot see the Ratha-yatra-lila in Sri Vrndavana " – This statement made by Bhakti Kovida Mahodaya is completely groundless and a figment of his own imagination. It is evident that the writer has never been to Vrndavana or Vraja-mandala, or he has never taken the trouble to inquire from the realized vaisnavas who constantly reside here. The three worshipful deities of the Gaudiya vaisnavas, namely Sri Madana-mohana, Sri Govindaji and Sri Gopinatha have Their respective temples in Vrndavana. The festival of Ratha-yatra-lila has been held in these temples with great pomp and splendour for hundreds of years. At the same time as the Sri Ratha-yatra

procession in Puri, the same festival is also held in the temples established by the other gosvamis such as the Sri Radha-Damodarji mandir, the Sri Radha-Syamasundarji mandir, the Sri Radha-Gokulanandaji mandir, and also in almost all the prominent temples of the other sampradayas such as the Sri Ranganathji temple and the Sri Shaha-Bihariji mandir. This annual Ratha-yatra-lila is also a common sight in the homes of thousands of Brajabasis. Not only in Vrndavana, this procession takes place also in Mathura, Nanda-gaon, Varsana and even in Radha-kunda. Moreover, there are also ancient temples of Sri Jagannatha deva in Vrndavana and Radha-kunda. Therefore, to say that the Ratha-yatra-lila is not performed in Vrndavana or Braja-mandala is completely false.

Throughout the world there are rupanuga vaisnavas. They have performed in the past, and still are performing, the procession of Sri Ratha-yatra-lila in order to nourish their bhajana (confidential service). An associate of Sri Gaurasundara, Sri Kamalakara Pippalai, is a friend of Krsna named Mahabala Sakha among the Dvadasa Gopalas (twelve prominent cowherd boys) in Krsna-lila. He has manifested the service and Ratha-yatra-lila of Sri Jagannathadeva in Bengal, in the district known as Mahesa. Even today this Sri Ratha-yatra festival is observed annually with magnificent pageantry. In the nearby district of Sri Rama-pura, the service of Sri Jagannathadeva is conducted both in Vallabhapura and Chatara, where Ratha-yatra has been observed for hundreds of years. In the village of Dhama-rai, (district of Dhaka) Ratha-yatra is very famous. The Vyasadeva of Sri Gaura-lila, Sri Vrndavana dasa Thakura, has also established a Deity of Sri Jagannath deva in his own village of Sripata, Sri Mamagacchi in Sri Modadruma Dvipa in Sri Navadvipa Dhama. The service of Sri Jagannathadeva is still going on there even today. The Ratha-yatra of Mahisadala, in the district of Medinipura, is also very famous. These days even in the huge cities of America such as San Francisco, Sri Ratha-yatra is celebrated in a grand style, in accordance with the mood of Sriman Mahaprabhu.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has expressed a particular mood in regard to Ratha-yatra. He always considered that Sri Krsna, being mounted upon His chariot, is returning to Vrndavana, to meet with all the gopis, especially with Srimati Radhika, who had been afflicted by the severe pains of separation from Krsna for a very long time. We should always remember that the Sri Rupanuga acaryas who were possessed of the necessary facilities, have manifested this pastime of the Ratha-yatra festival on the earthly plane in order to stimulate the aforementioned mood of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu within their hearts and to nourish their bhajana. Some niskincana Rupanuga vaisnavas, being bereft of the necessary facilities for observing this festival have stimulated this mood within their hearts by manasi-seva. Alternatively, they nourish their bhava by taking darsana of Sri Ratha-yatra-lila in various places such as Puri Dhama. The purpose of both approaches is fundamentally one. There is no difference between them.

2) Seeing the ratha (chariot) would stimulate a terribly undesirable apprehension in the hearts of the vraja-gopis. Therefore, how can the rupanuga vaisnavas, who are following the moods of the gopis, join in the Ratha-yatra procession?

This conception is also completely wrong in all respects. Adorned with the sentiment and complexion of Sri Radha, Sri Gaurasundara is directly Sri Krsna Himself, Sri Gadadhara Gosvami (Srimati Radha), Sri Svarupa Damodara (Sri Lalitaji), Sri Raya Ramananda (Sri Visakha), Srila Rupa Gosvami (Sri Rupa Manjari), Sri Sanatana Gosvami (Sri Lavanga Manjari), Sri Das Gosvami (Sri Rati Manjari) and all of the associates of Sri Gaurasundara, who were all mainly sakhis or sakhas in Braja, assembled together for Ratha-yatra. They all danced and chanted before the chariot, deeply immersed in the mood, krsna lana vraje yai--e-bhava antara: "Let us take Krsna and go back to Vrndavana." Did the associates of Mahaprabhu feel any distress or anguish upon seeing the

chariot? Definitely not. Then why will their followers, the Rupanuga vaisnavas feel any anguish or undesirable apprehension?

The internal purpose of the moods of Ratha-yatra as promoted by Sri Gaurasundara is as follows: after a long period of separation, on the occasion of the solar eclipse at Kuruksetra, Srimati Radhika and the gopis met with Sri Krsna. But Srimati Radhika was not satisfied due to the fact that Sri Krsna was dressed as a king and was surrounded by immense opulence, elephants, horses, military generals and His associates of Dvaraka. She wanted to see Krsna dressed as a cowherd boy in Vrndavana, the place of His sweet human-like pastimes. Therefore she wanted to bring Krsna back to Vraja. It is evident from the Padma purana that the pastime of Krsna's returning again to Vrndavana on a chariot is exhibited in Sri Jagannath Puri and other places in Sri Ratha-yatra-lila. Therefore, what is there to impede the manifestation of Ratha-yatra in Sri Vrndavana or Sri Navadvipa Dhama? In order to stimulate this profound mood that was established by Sriman Mahaprabhu, His devoted followers can perform Ratha-yatra everywhere, and have indeed done so. The mood of Sriman Mahaprabhu has been revealed in the verse:

yah kaumara-harah sa eva hi varas ta eva caitra-ksapas
(Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya-lila: Chapter Thirteen, Text 121)

and also:

ei dhuya-gane nacena dvitiya prahara
krsna lana vraje yai--e-bhava antara

"Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu used to sing this song [seita parana-natha] especially during the latter part of the day, and He would think, 'Let Me take Krsna and go back to Vrndavana.' This ecstasy was always filling His heart."
(Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya-lila: Chapter One, Text 56)

Yes, it is true that when the gopis or the vaisnavas who have taken shelter of gopi-bhava, they see the chariot which takes Krsna out of Vraja and far away from the gopis, they feel anguish and the apprehension that Krsna will not come back. However, when see the chariot on which Krsna sat and came back to Vrndavana, they become overjoyed, not sorrowful.

Uddhava, after taking permission from the gopas and gopis of Vrndavana, sat upon his chariot and was about to return to Mathura to meet with Krsna. At that time the Vraja gopas and gopis, overwhelmed with prema, adorned the chariot with various presents for Krsna and bade Uddhavaji farewell with great respect.

sri-suka uvaca
atha gopir anujnapy
yasodam nandam eva ca
gopan amantrya dasarho
yasyann aruruhe ratham
(Srimad Bhagavatam 10.47.64)

Furthermore, after some time, Sri Baladevaji came to Nanda Gokula on a chariot. When he arrived, all the gopas and gopis welcomed Him with great affection.

sri-suka uvaca

balabhadrah kuru-srestha
bhagavan ratham asthitah
suhrd-didrksur utkanthah
prayayau nanda-gokulam

parisvaktas cirotkanthair
gopair gopibhir eva ca
ramo 'bhivadya pitarav
asirbhir abhinanditah
(Srimad Bhagavatam 10.65.1,2)

Sri Gaudiya vaisnava acarya Srila Jiva Gosvami on the basis of the verses of Padma purana, has described that Krsna returned to Vraja upon a chariot after killing Dantavakra. Upon hearing the sound of Krsna's conch and the rumbling of His chariot, all the gopas and gopis of Vraja surmised that Krsna was returning. Driven by excessive eagerness to see Him, even feeble, old women ran with great haste from wherever they were in the direction of the sound of Krsna's conch and chariot. When they drew nearer and saw that Garuda was sitting on the flag of the chariot, they became sure that Krsna was definitely returning to Vraja. Being overwhelmed with joy, they became motionless like statues and were unable to go any further. Only their gaze advanced in the direction of the approaching chariot.

stri-bala-vrddha-vanita-braja-vasinaste
krsna gatim yadu-pura-danu-maya sankhat
evam dravanti capalam sma tatha vidurna
svatmanamapyahaha kim punaragrapascat?

atha punah parya-ginkhacchanikha
dhvaniniragala-ratha-ghargharasvana
svarga-janakrta sadya eva
sthagati-gataya-starava va'vatasthire

(Sri Gopal Campu *tri. pu.* 34, 35)

Therefore the idea that the Vraja gopis become distressed and apprehensive upon seeing a chariot in all circumstances is not at all correct.

In the pastime of Sri Ratha-yatra and also on the path of Sri Rupanuga bhajana, the importance of the internal mood is predominant. Externally perceived substances or places are not more important than the internal mood. In Ratha-yatra the internal mood that Krsna is returning to Vraja is stimulated. There is no internal sphurti (inspired vision) relating to Dvaraka or Mathura dhama in this lila. The inspired vision is only of Sri Krsna's returning to Vraja after being absent for a very long time. It is in this mood that Sri Jagannathdevaji travels from the Jagannatha Mandira in Puri to the Sri Gundica Mandira. This signifies His journey from Dvaraka to Vrndavana. During this journey Sri Gaurasundara and His confidential associates experienced the utmost jubilation, being deeply absorbed in the moods of Sri Radha and the Vraja-gopis respectively. Moreover, they all assembled together before the chariot, singing and dancing in great joy, fully absorbed in exactly the same bhava during the *ulti-ratha-yatra* (the festival of Jagannathadeva's return to the Sri Mandir from Sri Gundica).

Did they think that by observing Ratha-yatra in the opposite direction that Sri Krsna was leaving Vrndavana and returning to Mathura or Dvaraka? Never. Such an understanding must be mistaken. It has been mentioned in Sri Caitanya Caritamrta how Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His associates assembled together, danced and performed kirtan at the *ulti-ratha-yatra*:

ara dine jagannathera bhitara- vijaya
rathe cadi' jagannatha cale nijalaya

"The next day Lord Jagannatha came out from the temple and, riding on the car, returned to His own abode."

purvavat kaila prabhu lana bhakta-gana
parama anande karena nartana-kirtana

"As previously, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His devotees chanted and danced with great pleasure."

(Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya-lila 14.244, 245)

Although the Vraja-gopis and especially Srimati Radhika were extremely anxious to see Sri Krsna, they would not leave Vrndavana even to go the very short distance to where Krsna was staying in Mathura. Then how can Sri Gaurasundara, Who is adorned with the sentiments of Srimati Radhika, and His associates stay at the Puri Mandira or Sri Gambhira? The Puri Mandira and Sri Gambhira are the embodiment of Dvaraka because the Ratha-yatra sets off from there. Alternatively, Sri Gaurasundara used to see the gardens of Puri to be Vrndavana, the ocean to be Yamuna and Cataka-parvata to be Govardhana. In such a Vrndavana, what aspect of the Ratha-yatra-lila festival would be contrary to the principles of raganuga or rupanuga bhakti in the eyes of the respectable Bhakti-Kovida Mahadaya?

Why did the Vraja-vasi Gosvamis, Srila Thakura Bhakti Vinoda, Srila Prabhupada, Pujiyapada Srila Sridhara Gosvami Maharaja and all the prominent Sri Rupanuga Acaryas go to Sri Puri Dhama to have darsan of Ratha-yatra, if Ratha-yatra darsana would be the cause of any type of disturbance or apprehension that something undesirable was about to happen? It appears that Vraja-gopi-prema is simply stimulated by having darsana of Ratha-yatra.

3) From ancient times up until the present day, no great personality who was expert in the performance of bhajana, has ever performed the procession of Ratha-yatra lila in abhinna-vraja mandala, Sri Navadvipa Dhama.

The respectable writer, Bhakti-Kovida Mahadaya, has stated that is inappropriate to hold Ratha-yatra in Sri Navadvipa Dhama because no great historical personalities who are proficient in bhajana have ever manifested Ratha-yatra-lila in Navadvipa. This statement is meaningless and incoherent in all respects for the following reason. From the time of Sriman Mahaprabhu until the present day, almost all Gaudiya acaryas and bhaktas have made a pilgrimage to Puri Dhama at the time of Ratha-yatra to have darsana of the festival. In this way, the divinely inspired vision of the moods exhibited by Sri Gaurasundara is stimulated within their hearts and thus their bhajana is nourished. Until now, there had been no impetus to manifest Ratha-yatra in Sri Navadvipa Dhama and our previous acaryas had not considered it necessary to do so. However, whenever the inspiration came in the hearts of great personalities, they have manifested this lila in various places in Gauda-mandala, such as in the district of Mahesa. Thus, if a great personality is also inspired to manifest this lila in Sri Navadvipa Dhama, then it is in no way contrary to the path of Sri Rupanuga

bhajana. For example, in the Sri Gaudiya vaisnava-sampradaya, from the time of Srīman Mahāprabhuji, Śrīmad Bhagavatam has been considered the natural commentary on Śrī Brahma-sūtra. However, when the necessity arose, Śrī Gaudiya Vedāntācārya Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa prabhu manifested a separate commentary, namely Śrī Govinda Bhaṣya. From the point of view of Bhakti-Kovida Mahādāya, is this activity contrary to siddhanta or is it the embodiment of prestige for our Śrī Gaudiya sampradaya?

4) Jagad-guru Om Visnupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Thakur has not performed Ratha-yatra-lila in Sri Gaura-dhama.

Jagadguru Om Visnupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura has manifested Śrī Radha-kunda and Śrī Syama-kunda in Vraja-pattana (Śrī Caitanya Matha) within Śrī Dhama Mayapura. He has preached daiva-varnasrama dharma. He has reestablished the use of saffron cloth and tridandi sannyasa in the Gaudiya vaisnava sampradaya. He has flown the victory flag of Gaudiya vaisnava dharma throughout the world. Prior to the appearance of this crown jewel in the dynasty of acaryas, no other acarya ever inaugurated the aforementioned activities. Yet can any of these projects of Srila Prabhupada be considered contrary to the principles of Śrī Rupanuga bhakti? Never. Anyone who could say such a thing would have to be utterly ignorant of bhakti-tattva.

5) In Sri Navadvipa Dhama, how is the darsan of Dvaraka possible or appropriate?

We have already explained that the predominant bhava in Śrī Ratha-yatra-lila is "kṛṣṇa lāna vraje yai." There is not even the slightest scent of a sphurti (momentary vision) or darsana of Dvaraka in this bhava. Therefore even the question of any kind of Dvaraka darsana arising from the performance of Ratha-yatra-lila in Śrī Navadvipa Dhama is completely irrelevant.

On the other hand, Śrī Navadvipa Mandala, which is non-different from Vrndaavana, is aṁśi-dhama i.e. the root cause of all dhama in which all other dhama exist. Mathura, Dvaraka, Ayodhya and Paravyoma are all eternally existing in Śrī Navadvipa Dhama just as all the plenary portions of aṁśi Kṛṣṇa such as Narayana and Viṣṇu exist eternally within Him.

At Candrasekhara Bhavan (Vraja-pattana), in Mayapura Dhama, Śrī Gaurasundara personally used to dance in the mood of Śrī Rukmini. It is well known that Śrī Rukminidevi is an associate of Dvaraka-lila. Therefore, if this lila is possible in Vraja-pattana, which is non-different to Vraja or Śrī Radha-kunda, then how can Dvaraka darsana be impossible in Śrī Dhama Navadvipa? Thus on what grounds can it be said that the manifestation of Ratha-yatra-lila is not possible?

Hence the conclusion is that there is an inseparable relationship between Ratha-yatra-lila and Rupanuganugatyā. Śrī Rupanuga vaisnavas manifest this lila everywhere in Navadvipa Dhama and thus, according to the path founded by Srīman Mahāprabhu, they inspire the internal mood expressed in the following verse written by Srila Rupa Gosvami:

priyah so 'yam kṛṣṇah.... kalindi-pulina-vipinaya sprhayati
(Padyavali 383, Śrī Caitanya Caritamṛta, Madhya-lila 1.76)

This thoroughly nourishes the bhajana of the genuine Śrī Rupanuga vaisnavas.

-- Sampadaka (editor)