LETTERS IN RESPONSE TO ARTICLES ON THE GAUDĪYA SAMPRADAYA AND MADHVĀCĀRYA

LETTER FROM JAYADVAITA SWAMI

Dear Narasingha Mahārāja

Daņḍavats,

My warm and hearty congratulations and thanks to you, and Giri Mahārāja, for your response to the Madhvaite faction that attacked Śrīla Prabhupāda and the Gauḍīya sampradāya. You have trounced their arguments as they deserved to be trounced, and at the same time strengthened our solidarity with the worthy Madhvaite devotees of the Lord. In this way, you have done an outstanding service to Śrīla Prabhupāda and to the honor of the entire sampradāya. I'm sure that Śrīla Prabhupāda would be delighted and proud of you. My daṇḍavats at your feet for such a wonderful service!

Your servant, Jayadvaita Swami

LETTER FROM GIRIRAJA SWAMI

I read your refutation of the attack on Śrīla Prabhupāda and our line on the internet and was most impressed. I am sure that Śrīla Prabhupāda is pleased with you. Although your nature may not allow you to serve within the structure of the institution of Iskcon, I am convinced that your devotion and dedication to Śrīla Prabhupāda are no less, nor are his love and appreciation for you any less. Thank you.

Your servant, in service to Śrīla Prabhupāda Giriraja Swami

LETTER FROM MALATI DEVI DASI

I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation for the accuracy and insight represented in your response defeating allegations against Śrīla Prabhupāda by a minority faction of the Madhava Sect. Your love and affection for His Divine Grace was revealed through this act.

Your servant, Malati Devi Dasi (GBC member)

A LETTER TO THE GBC BODY OF ISKCON FROM SYAMASUNDARA PRABHU

Dear Mahārājas and Prabhus,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Bhakta vighna-vināśa Narasimhadeva ki jaya! The following texts are from the website of HH Narasingha Swami (aka Jagat Guru Swami). He has taken the initiative to tackle this problem head-on and has done so marvellously well. He should be given whole-hearted thanks by ISKCON for his endeavour. To defend Śrīla Prabhupāda he personally went to several heads of the mathas in Udipi and got signed letters refuting the blasphemy of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The website contains the scanned original letters in Kannada script as well as a video of an interview with Pejāvara Swami who is glorifying Śrīla Prabhupāda. I am appending below translations of the letters. In a separate text is an article from the same website defending the Gaudīya sampradāya and its link to the Madhva sampradāya. It has been very nicely done, is educative, and convincing. They should be commended for their work. I beg to remain...

Your humble servant, Syamasundara Dasa

LETTER FROM JAHNAVA NITAI DASA

Great work on the Udupi letters. They are fantastic!

Your servant, - Jahnava Nitai Das

LETTER FROM BHAKTA HITESH

I went through your website and found it very interesting especially the issue on Tattvavāda vs. Gauḍīya.....it was very well written. Could you please mail the email address of those articles. I want to talk to the author...

- Bhakta Hitesh

LETTER FROM PRASANNA

Sir,

In your website you "claim" that <u>the Gaudīya parampara is</u> <u>part of the Madhva sampradāya</u>, when it reality, it violates the very fundamental principles of Vedic thought re-established by Śrī Madhvācārya.

- 1) There are no internal differences in Viṣṇu (this is expressed by the statement, "neha nānāsti kiñcana"). In other words, there are no differences between Viṣṇu, His soul, His body, His avatāras. Thought they are all one consistent perfect entity, we are capable of differentiating these properties just as while describing a tall tree, though the tallness and the attribute of being a tree can be identified separately, they have no separate existence. Śrī Madhvācārya expounds upon this concept elegantly through the notion of viśeṣa, the power of an entity to make difference appear where there is none. In other words, Viṣṇu is one entity, and though different avatāras are perceived it is ridiculous to say that Kṛṣṇa is superior to Rāma or Kṛṣṇa is superior to Viṣṇu, Viṣṇu's head is superior to his feet, etc.
 - 2) Mokṣa can only be achieved through jñāna pūrvaka bhakti,

that is devotion with an understanding of what is behind it. The Caitanya sampradāya places so much emphasis on bhakti, that the importance of proper knowledge is neglected. Especially for us ordinary mortals, if we don't have proper knowledge, our devotion won't be as strong. For example, we may mistakenly think that we are the controllers of ourselves and we are somehow doing God a favour by worshipping him. Only proper knowledge can get rid of such absurd thinking.

- 3) The quotes you pull to <u>support the divinity of Caitanya</u> are all bogus. For example, the one from the *Narasimha Purāṇa* does not exist. You can verify it yourself. Other quotes have been misread, misquoted, and it is surprising that you would go to such an extent to 'force' Caitanya's divinity on sacred texts. It is wrong to attribute divinity to an ordinary mortal. I am not denying that Caitanya is a devotee of God, but I am asserting that it is wrong to attribute divinity to him, because it is an insult to Viṣṇu.
- 4) Every soul will essentially follow what is its own nature. It is wrong and futile to twist what is right, just so it can appeal to the general public.

- Prasanna

Editors Response

Thank you for your letter.

You have made a few interesting observations, which I will try to answer here.

Firstly, you have said in your introductory paragraph that the Gauḍīyas claim that they are part of the Madhva *sampradāya*. That is correct. And it is not only the Gauḍīyas who claim this, Śrī Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha Svamijī of Pejāvara Adhokṣaja Mata also accepts this (please see the <u>transcript of his lecture</u> in Māyāpura). When

your own present-day leaders and scholars are claiming the Gauḍīyas to be part of their sampradāya, I don't see why this topic makes you people become so belligerent and irate. We have stressed in our article that we do not claim to be followers of Ācārya Madhva and his Dvaita philosophy; we are a branch of that line, hence we have some common similarities, but also, we have some acute differences. Unfortunately, rather than harmonize, you seem only interested in finding the differences. This does not auger well for the future of the Madhva community — the new generation of Tattvavādīs are certainly not as serious as their forefathers were. If it were so, the young 'brahmanas' wouldn't be looking for suitable financial situations in the countries of the mlecchas. Therefore, any philosophical argument from their side can only be seen as an intellectual exercise — nothing more. Nevertheless, for the time being I will indulge you...

In your first point you say that there are no differences between Visnu, His soul (sic), His body, His avatāras etc. We are in perfect agreement with this statement. All avatāras are all perfect, and to state that an avatāra has some anomalies is purely māyāvāda. However, in the area of rasa-tattva there are some intrinsic differences. Our ācāryas have mentioned that although the Lord and His avatāras are all pūrnam, Śrī Krsna is exalted because of His sweet pastimes, beauty, associates etc. These attributes are not exhibited by other incarnations of the Lord. For example, we do not find Narasimha performing rāsalīlā with the gopīkas of Vraja, nor do we find Matsya playing the flute. In the pastimes of other incarnations, the sweetness (madhurya) found in krsna-līlā is absent. So, although the Lord appears when there is a need to establish religious principles and annihilate the demons, in Śrī Krsna we see that there is more than just paritrānāya sādhūnām vināśāya ca duskrtām. We also observe that He is performing informal pastimes with His associates, something which is absent in all other avatāras. This is why the Gaudīyas give preference upon Śrī Krsna. It is not that they belittle or deny the greatness of any other form of Godhead.

In your second point you state that moksa is achieved through 'jñāna-pūrvaka-bhakti'. We also agree with this. It is a common fallacy that many people think that the members of the Gauḍīya sampradāya are simply sentimentalists, or inferior because they do not stress any type of jnana. Knowledge within bhakti is important, otherwise we may create our own process thinking it to be devotion, when it is merely a concoction. I refer you to Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūsana's Govinda Bhāsya commentary on the Brahma-sūtras, Īśāvasyopanisad Bhāsya, Nāmārtha Sudhā Bhāsya on Visnu Sahasranāma, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's Sat-sandarbhas, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's Bhakti-rasāmrta-sindhu and Śrī Laghu Bhāgavatāmṛtam Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛtam and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura's Āmnāya-sūtras, Tattva-sūtras and Tattva-viveka to name but a few works of the Gaudīya sampradāya expounding the science of bhakti. Some of these works may be found on the internet.

Your third point came as rather a surprise to me. All of the points that you raise have been answered in our essay on the <u>divinity of Śrī Caitanya</u>. I request you to go back and read through it again thoroughly in order to properly understand our viewpoint.

Your fourth point is a little vague. You say, 'It is wrong to twist what is right, just so it can appeal to the general public'. Who is to say what is right? The Madhvas will claim that they are right, whereas the Gauḍīyas will say that they are. Similarly, the Advaitins and Visiṣṭhādvaitins will claim that they are solely correct. Each one will claim that the other is twisting the truth. It seems to be a very relative subject. The Tattvavādīs will claim that they silenced the Śaṅkarites, while a few miles away in Śṛṅgeri a different story is told. As a Gauḍīya I have my own viewpoint on what is actually right, as I am sure you do as a follower of Śrī Madhvācārya. It is only natural that we will disagree on certain

philosophical points when we belong to different traditions, yet to be absolutists and expound that all are wrong and we are the only ones who are correct simply smacks of Muslim/Christian fundamentalism.

In 12th Century Karnataka, smashing all other doctrines into dust was perfectly acceptable. In the 21st century however, total intolerance of others religious beliefs is not appreciated by the majority of intelligent people — how will a community with such an attitude survive? It would be a nice change if members of the Madhva community, such as yourself, adopted a less bigoted approach and tried to see the similarities with other Vaiṣṇava sampradāyas.

Unfortunately, we are seeing a new wave of arrogant fanaticism amongst some of the Madhva youth nowadays.

Response from Prasanna

Sir,

Two of the points which are a very strong part of your Gauḍīya philosophy are non-existent in Indian scriptures.

- 1) The existence of Rādhā there is no mention of this in the scriptures, and the very thought of God falling in love with someone is something sickening pulled out of Greek mythology.
- 2) I stated this earlier, and I will reiterate this: your quote about Caitanya is bogus and non-existent. If you feel otherwise feel free to specify where in the *Narasimha Purāṇa* you got this from, so its veracity can easily be verified. Also, Santoṣī Mā and Bhārata Mātā represent the views of an individual and in no way, shape or form reflect that of either the community as a whole or the philosophy as propounded by Śrī Madhvācārya and other great stalwarts of the Dvaita tradition. The same holds for Āyyāpa and Rādhā. The main objection here is the forcing of divinity on either fictious characters (as is the case with Āyyāpa) or ordinary

beings (Caitanya, a devotee of Viṣṇu, but nothing more). It is an insult to those who are genuinely in such high positions, and I'm sure Caitanya himself would not be happy to be elevated to the status of that being whom he holds in such high regard. How this is misconstrued as bigoted is absolutely beyond me!!! You contradict yourself very frequently. First off, you claim that you are part of the Madhva *sampradāya*. Then you state that you are a branch of it, though you don't belong to it (which is itself a contradiction, since a branch of a philosophy is part of the philosophy, just as a branch on a tree is part of the tree).

The very fact that you disagree with the Madhva philosophy shows that you are a separate school of thought. If you sincerely accepted Madhvācārya as a Guru, you would accept what he said, instead of contradicting him. Prabhupāda clearly goes against Madhvācārya's interpretation of texts, so it would be hypocrisy on your part to claim both as Gurus. Your view of this as being bigoted and "arrogant fanaticism" is sad. Intolerance of wrong knowledge has always been sanctioned by the scriptures. Indeed, this was the spirit with which original works and commentaries against various other schools of thought were written by Śrī Madhvācārya, Śrī Jayatīrtha, etc. Unfortunately, you associate this quest for right knowledge to be identical to the fanatical zeal of conversion and hatred of 'people' of other faiths, that was practiced by Christian/Muslim fundamentalists. As for your comment that such views will not be accepted by the modern generation, I happen to be a college student who has lived in the US for the past 15 years. The desire for proper knowledge is intrinsic to human nature and is quite hard to quell. The glaring contradictions in your branch of philosophy are not quite as bad as your desire to associate it with the pristine philosophy of Śrī Madhvācārya.

Cheers, Prasanna

Editors reply:

Dear Prasanna,

I have noted the contents of your last letter. As with your previous one, I will reply point for point.

You say that Śrī Rādhā is non-existent and is not found in any scripture. Please refer to *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* 2.49, 9.34, *Nārada Purāṇa* 2.80, 2.81, *Brahma Purāṇa* Ch.7 and *Padma Purāṇa* 4.2, 4.7, 4.20, 4.23, 5.70, 5.73, 5.74, 5.77, 5.82, 5.83, 6.93. These books are available in most Indological bookshops. Of course, I am sure that it will be most convenient for you to evade all this evidence and claim that these references are all interpolations. If so, kindly enlighten us and reveal the identity of the mysterious person who has interpolated so many scriptures? Of course, rather than just blow the whole thing off as an interpolation, it would be more professional and thorough of you to check the Sanskrit in all the available copies of these *Puranas* in order to confirm your conclusion of interpolation.

You have also stated that the very thought of God falling in love with someone is something sickening pulled out of Greek mythology. Firstly, can you give me some empirical proof to show how the roots of Rādhā-worship stems from Greek mythology? How did it find ground and popularity in Mediaeval India during the time of Śrī Caitanya, centuries after the Greeks had left? As far as my limited historical knowledge of India goes, neither Alexander, nor the Greek satraps after him, ever got as far as Bengal and Orissa, so how is it that the worship of Śrī Rādhā became so prevalent there? I look forward to your reply. Obviously, you feel sickened by this because you are superimposing your own limited mundane consciousness upon the Lord's pastimes. If it were not so, you would not make such an offensive and ridiculous exclamation. What is your reasoning for Kṛṣṇa performing the rāsa—līlā, which is found in daśam-skandha of Bhāgavatam? Is that also

an interpolation? Kṛṣṇa has said specifically in *Gītā* that His activities are all divine (*janma karma ca me divyam*). People of less intelligence tend to believe that Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa-līlā* and other esoteric pastimes of the Lord are simply mundane erotica (in fact, previously Manish Tandon said something to this effect on your website and was later corrected for some reason or other and his foolish posting was later removed from the Dvaita website). According to Gauḍīya doctrine, Śrī Rādhā is not an ordinary *jīva*, just as Lakṣmī Devī is not an ordinary *jīva*; She is considered to be one of the potencies of the Lord. Is the Lord incapable of showing affection to His consort, or to His devotees? For somebody who professes to belong to a personalist school of thought, I find it unusual that you claim that God cannot love! This implies either one of two things:

- 1) God has no feelings whatsoever and is therefore impersonal.
- 2) God cannot have feelings since all emotions are mundane. Neither of these assumptions are correct (unless you are an Advaitin, a Jain or a Buddhist!)

Furthermore, on at least three occasions I remember visiting Udupi and hearing Jayadeva's *Gīta Govinda* being sung at night in the Śrī Kṛṣṇa temple. As you are probably aware, the topic of this *kāvya* is the love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. If such a *kāvya* is bogus, why was it sung for the Deity? Why did ex-swami Vidyābhūṣana Tīrtha produce a cassette (while he was a *sannyāsī*) of songs from that poem?

As regards Śrī Caitanya – I will find you the quote that you want when you find me the quotes that Ācārya Madhva gives from Skanda Purāṇa (ajñānam jñānado viṣṇuḥ) and Padma Purana (nrpadya satavrtyanta) that he refers to in his Viṣṇu Tattva Vinirṇaya. They are not to be found in these Purāṇas (you can check!) Could you also locate the following texts that Śrīmad Ācārya has quoted from in his various works – Upagītā, Kamatha

Śruti, Karma-viveka, Kalapa Śruti, Tantra-prakāśikā, Kapileya Samhitā, Kāraṇa-viveka, Kauśika Śruti, Gatisara, Adhara, Aruni Śruti, Upa-ṇāradīya, Ubhaya-nirukta, Indraduymna Śruti, Upāsana Lakṣaṇa, Jīva-tattva, Guṇa-parama, Gītā-sāra, Gītā-kalpa, Guru-viveka, Gautamākhila, Jyotiṣa Samhitā, Tattva-sāra, Tattvodyoga, Tantra Bhāgavata, Tantra Mālā, Tri-yoga, Nibandha, Prāṇa Samhitā, Mukti-tattva, Yādavādhyātama, Linga-nirṇaya, Mahodadhi, Vicāra, Vipārita Śruti, Viśvambhara Śruti, Vimala Samhitā, Vaibhāvya, Vaiśeṣya, Viśva Tantra, Loka-tattva, Vayu-prokta, Vāllabhya, Boddhāvya, Pravṛtta Samhitā, Pāvamānīya Vijaya, Pautrāyaṇa Śruti, Puruṣottama Tantra, Vimarda Śruti, Sumata, Sadguṇya, Pippalāda Śruti, Kathaka Śruti, Painginī Śruti, and Sauparna Śruti.

I would also like a reference proving Madhvācārya's identity as Mukhya Prāṇa from a Vedic or Purāṇika source which all parties (Dvaita, Advaita, Visiṣṭhādvaita etc) will unanimously accept as specifically referring to Madhva, and not simply your own interpretation of the text (as in the case of *Balitthā Sṭktam*). I would also like some acceptable evidence to prove that Jaya Tīrtha was Madhva's pack-bull, that Vādirāja Tīrtha was Rukmiṇī's *brāhmaṇa* messenger, that Rāghavendra Tīrtha was Prahlāda and that Purandara Dāsa was Nārada Rsi.

I understand that Santoṣī Mā, Bhārata-mata and Āyyāpa are not accepted by staunch Tattvavādīs, therefore I raise the question, why do you sit idly by while your svāmījīs dress the Deity in such alankāras? Silence means affirmation — when your pristine philosophy is being diluted from the inside by some of your aṣṭa-maṭha svāmīs, why do you people remain quiet? I presume that in the near future when the Deity is dressed in Mahatma Gandhi alankāra, Sunil Gavaskar alankāra, or even Satya Sāi Bābā alankāra, we will see no reaction from your community. When someone outside your fold does something, you are on the warpath, yet how is it that when some of your sannyāsīs perform some gross improprieties (I need not get into details), you keep quiet? Isn't this hypocrisy? Gita Govinda? Santoṣī Mā alankāra?

Āyyāpa idols in the temple? From all these points it seems that you people really don't have your house in order, since your svāmījīs are doing so many things which are contrary to traditional Dvaita philosophy (at least, according to your own estimation).

A branch of the tree is part of the tree, but it is not the tree itself. It is distinct from the main trunk of the tree. From the historical point of view, we are unarguably a branch of the Madhva sampradāya since some of our pūrvācāryas were in that line. From the philosophical point of view, I have stated very clearly that we are a separate school of thought, though we agree on certain points made by Madhva. This is accepted by Pejāvara Sri, Śrī Vidyāmanya Tīrtha Svāmījī, Śrī Bannanje Govindācārya the late Śrī Padmanabha Acar, and Dr. B.N.K. Sharma. Despite all this, it still seems to be a difficult matter to digest for some! Are you accusing these stalwarts of being hypocrites because they disagree with your point of view? Surely not...

If Gaudīya Vaisnavas are the dangerously deviant Kali-yuga cult that you try to make us out to be, please explain how it is that so many westerners (and Indians for that matter) who previously performed such degraded activities as cow-killing, illicit sex, drugs, alcohol etc. are now living lifestyles that many from Madhva brāhmaṇa families don't even follow any more? How many modern-day Madhvas follow Ekādaśī strictly? How many of them are engaged twenty-four hours a day in spiritual activities such as śālagrāma-pūjā, nāma-japa, sankīrtana etc? How many of them are learning Sanskrit or risking their lives in spreading sanātana-dharma in Muslim countries? How does all this fit in with your philosophy? If we are offenders to Visnu, then why is it that the late Śrī Vidyāmanya Tīrtha Svāmījī of Śrī Palimaru Matha told me personally that the western followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda were sāttvika-jīvas. How can an offender to God be a sāttvika-jīva? Was he wrong? Was he lying simply to make me feel good? If we are such heretics, why do your leaders stay in Gaudīya Vaisnava

temples when they travel to the west? Why do they ask Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava movements for financial aid in order to build temples, chaultries, Gītā Bhavāns etc? Why do they approach Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava institutions to manage their temples (such as the Varabandhesvara temple in Malpe)? Is it that Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava facilities and money are good, but Gauḍīya philosophy is bad? I would be very cautious in answering these questions, lest you accuse your leaders of hypocrisy.

The sad fact is that today Dvaitavāda is not a doctrine that can benefit the world because it only caters to a particular caste and community. In fact, in the western hemisphere (apart from a few Indologists) who had even heard of Madhva and his philosophy prior to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism being spread by our Śrīla Prabhupāda? Now thousands of people from all over the world come to Udupi and pay homage to Madhva. This is another fact which is hard to swallow for some.

One more point I wish to make: You have said that you have lived in the US for fifteen years and that is very clear to me. 'Cheers' is not an appropriate cultured way of ending a letter to anyone (especially to someone who is senior to you). Neither is it very becoming from one who is supposed to be a *brāhmaṇa*. Talking about philosophy is one thing—living it is another.

LETTER FROM SHRISHA RAO

Hare Kṛṣṇa!

Please find below a posting from the Dvaita Digest which refutes us. How could we reply? – R. Jai Simman

Singapore

One of the offensive falsehoods created and propagated by the Gauḍīya types (see <u>Validity of the Gauḍīya parampara and Madhvācārya</u> and others) is that H.H. Pejāvara Svāmījī claimed

that he was as the "dust from the feet" of Prabhupāda. Those of us who know the respective worths of the individuals concerned have always dismissed the claim as a cheap trick.

In a recent message to the Dvaita web community, the Svāmījī himself has also disowned authorship of the statement attributed to him: "We are simply specks of dust at the feet of the disciples of Swami Prabhupāda who are spreading the message of *bhakti* and the *Bhāgavata* all over the world." We are misquoted here. We NEVER gave such statement anywhere. Though sometimes we praised Śrī Prabhupāda's achievements in spreading the *bhakti* message widely, such opinion has been never expressed by us.

This should set the record straight, and prevent further propagation of the absurd lie.

Regards, Shrisha Rao

Editors Reply:

The following quote was posted on the Dvaita website in April 1997 and remains posted there to this day (although two days after we posted this letter, they removed their entire search engine):

Another expression of appreciation was made on Śrī Madhvācārya's 750th anniversary celebrations when one of the Madhva pīṭādhipatīs spent the first half of his lecture glorifying Śrīmad Ācārya as the world's ultimate ācārya. Then, in a mood reflecting his profound humility, he proceeded to praise ISKCON's founder (Prabhupāda) in the presence of many Madhva sannyāsīs and devotees: "All of us are particles of dust at the feet of the disciples of Prabhupāda who are teaching the message of bhakti and the Bhāgavata all over the world."

The response to this posting was as follows:

The case of Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtha is entirely different. Unfortunately, I am not in a position to discuss that here, but I do feel very sorry for it.

We should note that the first posting on the Dvaita website does not directly mention Śrī Pejāvara Svāmījī (Śrī Viśveśa Tīrtharu), it was they (the list members) who implied in their response that the quote of the Madhva pīṭhādhipati indeed referred to Śrī Pejāvara Svāmījī. If we have misquoted the Svāmījī, it is because they implied that it was him and raised no objection at the time. Whether he used this wording or some other wording is irrelevant. The heart of the issue is that Pejāvara Svāmījī did indeed glorify the achievements and position of Śrīla Prabhupāda, as is obvious from his recent quote above. We were also personally present in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura when Pejāvara Śrī glorified Prabhupāda with the following quote:

Sage Bhagīratha only brought the divine Gaṅgā from heaven to India, but Swami Prabhupāda brought the Bhakti-Gaṅgā down from above and flooded the whole world! [Entire transcript here]

Therefore, our point remains that Pejāvara Svāmījī holds Śrīla Prabhupāda in high regard and has glorified him on several occasions. In a recent meeting with Pejāvara Sri, he reiterated his previous glorifications of Śrīla Prabhupāda and wrote such in an official letter. Additionally, all three other aṣṭa-maṭha svāmīs whom we met gave us letters of support.