

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism as a *Brahmā Samradāya*
Jīva Gosvāmī's *Krama-sandarbha* on the *Catuḥ-sloki-bhāgavata*
(*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 2.9.32-5)

Kiyokazu Okita
University of Oxford / University of Hamburg

Sampradāya, which can be translated as ‘tradition’ or ‘school’, consists of a body of philosophical conclusions and the generations of people who transmit it through the chain of a teacher-disciple relation. It is often observed that a chain of teacher-disciple succession is traced back to divine existence from which the school derives the authority of its teachings. Since the concept of *sampradāya* functions as the guarantor of the authenticity of a school and those who belong to it, it plays a vital role in the context of Indian intellectual traditions.

In the case of Vaiṣṇava traditions, based on a verse attributed to the *Padma-purāna*, four major schools have been accepted as authoritative since the medieval period namely, the *Śrī-sampradāya* founded by Rāmānuja, the *Brahmā-sampradāya* founded by Madhva, the *Rudra-sampradāya* founded by Viṣṇusvāmī, and the *Catuḥ-kumāra-sampradāya* founded by Nimbārka.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, founded by Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, claims to be the *Brahma-Mādhva-Gauḍīya sampradāya*. The term implies that two traditions – the Mādhva *sampradāya* and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism – share the same philosophical conclusions, and they are connected through the system of disciplic succession.

These two traditions, however, differ significantly in their philosophical conclusions. Consequently, there have been debates among contemporary academic scholars as well as practitioners of each tradition, regarding the identity of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and its relation to the Mādhva-*sampradāya*.

In this presentation, I argue that Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism forms a *Brahmā Sampradāya* not because it follows the *Brahma-Mādhva Sampradāya* but because the philosophy of the school is largely based on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which, in essence, is a revelation from Bhagavān to Brahmā.

According to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, this original revelation was transmitted from Brahmā to Nārada, who, in turn, transmitted it to Vyāsa, the supposed author

of the *Purāṇa*. Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, inaugurator of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, accepted the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as the most authoritative scripture. Subsequently Jīva Gosvāmī, one of Caitanya's direct followers, systematized the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology based on the *Purāṇa*.

According to the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* written by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, Kṛṣṇa Caitanya accepted Śrīdhara Svāmī's *Bhāvārtha-bodhinī* as the most authoritative commentary on the *Purāṇa*. According to the commentary, the original seed of the *Purāṇa* was condensed in the four verses called the *Catuḥ-śloki-bhāgavata* (i.e. the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 2.9.32-35). In this paper, I will substantiate my argument by examining the philosophical identity of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism based on Jīva Gosvāmī's *Krama-sandarbha* commentary on these four verses, particularly paying attention to its relation to Madhva's *Bhāgavata-tātparya-nirṇaya* and Śrīdhara's *Bhāvārtha-bodhinī*.