



# The Realization and Manifestation of Your Eternal Identity

Identity Transformation  
through *Rāgānuṅā-bhakti*

By Uttamaśloka dāsa

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## Invocation & Prayers

### Prayer to my *Dīkṣā-guru*

I offer my most humble and deeply grateful obeisances to A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmi Prabhupāda  
He is my *varṭma pradarsika guru*, *dīkṣā-guru* and first *śikṣā-guru*  
He introduced me to Vedic knowledge and the science of *bhakti-yoga*  
He engaged me in the service of Lord Caitanya, thus connecting me eternally to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa  
I am eternally indebted and inconceivably blessed to have his association and constant guidance

### Prayers to my *śikṣā-gurus*

I offer my prostrated obeisances at the lotus feet of Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmi Prabhupāda  
Whose powerful books awakened my sleeping consciousness and immersed it in *kṛṣṇa-kathā*  
He ignited an explosion of transcendental desires in my heart  
By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa he engaged me in Lord Caitanya's mission and let me help him change the world  
He purified my vision and taught me the potency of *guru-sevā* and *sādhana-bhakti*

I offer my prostrated obeisances at the feet of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī  
Whose astonishing books delineated the path of *bhakti* and the intricacies of *prema-bhakti-rasa*  
He ignited an explosion of transcendental desires in my heart  
By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa he revealed the infinite inconceivable reality of *mādhurya-rasa*  
He purified my vision so I could understand a drop of the esoteric ocean of Kṛṣṇa's eternal *līlā*

I offer my prostrated obeisances at the feet of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī  
Whose amazing books established the truth of Goloka's supremacy beyond Vaikuṅṭha  
He ignited an explosion of transcendental desires in my heart  
By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa he revealed the esoteric truths of the eternal realms and the means to attain them  
He purified my vision so I could clearly understand my ultimate destination

I offer my prostrated obeisances at the feet of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī  
Whose extraordinary books established the supremacy of the path of *bhakti* and Kṛṣṇa *prema*  
He ignited an explosion of transcendental desires in my heart  
By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa he revealed the incredible vast universe of *bhakti* within the *śāstras*  
He purified my vision so I could understand the essential truths of the *śāstras*

I offer my prostrated obeisances at the lotus feet of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura  
Whose nectarean books soothed and enlivened my intelligence with an endless shower of realizations  
He ignited an explosion of transcendental desires in my heart  
By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa he awakened the spiritual *lobha* dormant in my heart  
He purified my vision and illuminated the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* for me

I offer my prostrated obeisances at the feet of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura  
Whose enlightening books opened my eyes to the process of understanding my eternal identity  
He ignited an explosion of transcendental desires in my heart  
By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa he revealed the intricacies of realizing and manifesting my eternal identity  
He purified my vision and inspired me to pursue my relationship with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Their *līlā*

I offer my prostrated obeisances at the feet of Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī  
Whose exceptional books are deep oceans of the *līlās* of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa  
He ignited an explosion of transcendental desires in my heart  
By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa he revealed the esoteric nectar within the *līlās* of Lord Caitanya and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa  
He purified my vision so I could understand the inner purpose of Lord Caitanya's *līlā*

I offer my prostrated obeisances at the feet of Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī  
Whose *prema* imbued chanting inspired *ruci* in me for *kīrtana* of the Holy Names  
He ignited an explosion of transcendental desires in my heart  
By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa he blessed me with his association so I could assimilate the essence of *kīrtana-rasa*  
He is in my thoughts and heart every time I play *mṛdaṅga* and sing in *kīrtana*

I dedicate this book to Śrīla Prabhupāda  
And to all of my *śikṣā-gurus*  
Begging for their compassionate mercy  
I offer it humbly at their lotus feet  
In continued service to the mission of Lord Caitanya

I also dedicate this book to my Godsisters and Godbrothers  
I pray that my service in writing this book will be of value to them  
In their pursuit of *kṛṣṇa-prema-bhakti-rasa*

I offer my sincere respects to all Vaiṣṇavas from all *sampradāyas*  
I pray for the constant association and generosity of genuine *rasika* Vaiṣṇavas  
Who are the embodiment of truth, realized knowledge and *bhakti-rasa*  
I pray that this book will ignite an explosion of transcendental desires in the hearts of all Vaiṣṇavas

***Śrī Śrī Gandhārvikā Giridhari ki jaya!***

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## Introduction

### ***Dikṣā* and *śikṣā gurus* – many teachers, one purpose**

In the first chapter of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī* makes many statements about *dikṣā* and *śikṣā gurus* being one and the same – all of them are ultimately external manifestations of Kṛṣṇa appearing to help the fallen *jīvas* as *Śrī Guru*.

I first offer my respectful obeisances at the lotus feet of my initiating spiritual master and all my instructing spiritual masters. CC, 1.1.35

According to the deliberate opinion of all revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is non different from Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of the spiritual master delivers His devotees. CC, 1.1.45

One should know the instructing spiritual master to be the Personality of Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa manifests Himself as the Supersoul and as the greatest devotee of the Lord. CC, 1.1.47

From Śrīla Prabhupāda's Purport:

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī states that the instructing spiritual master is a bona fide representative of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself teaches us as the instructing spiritual master from within and without. From within He teaches as Paramatma, our constant companion, and from without He teaches from Bhagavad-gītā as the instructing spiritual master.

There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service, and the other is he who invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions. Thus, the instructions in the science of devotion are differentiated in terms of the objective and subjective ways of understanding. The *ācārya* in the true sense of the term, who is authorized to deliver Kṛṣṇa, enriches the disciple with full spiritual knowledge and thus awakens him to the activities of devotional service.

When, by learning from the self-realized spiritual master, one actually engages himself in the service of Lord Viṣṇu, functional devotional service begins. The procedures of this devotional service are known as *abhidheya*, or action one is duty bound to perform. Our only shelter is the Supreme Lord, and one who teaches how to approach Kṛṣṇa is the functioning form of the Personality of Godhead. There is no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters. If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service.

In 1937, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained the same principle in his *Vyasa Puja* offering to his *guru*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī:

Gentlemen, the offering of such an homage as has been arranged this evening to the *ācāryadeva* is not a sectarian concern, for when we speak of the fundamental principle of *gurudeva* or *ācāryadeva*, we speak of something that is of universal application.

There does not arise any question of discriminating my *guru* from yours or anyone else's. There is only one *guru*, who appears in an infinity of forms to teach you, me and all others.

*Guru* as “one in many forms” refers to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa appears through the *guru* in accordance with the intensity of his devotion. Thus, in the ultimate issue Kṛṣṇa is the *Guru*.

In *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, Śrī Uddhava and Viśvanātha Cakravartī explain the relationship between the different manifestations of *gurus* and their single purpose:

O my Lord! Intelligent persons can not fully express their indebtedness to you, even if they were endowed with the lifetime of Brahmā, because on remembering what you have done for them, their joy increases even more: appearing externally as *guru* and internally as Paramātmā, you reveal the goal of *prema* to the devotees. SB, 11.29.6

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

Those with discrimination can never become debtless in their worship, even if they worshipped You for a life span of Brahmā, because, on remembering what You have done, their bliss increases. What have You done? You appear externally as the *mantra-guru* and *śikṣā-guru*, by whom one receives Your *mantra* and instructions on *bhakti* and You appear internally as Paramātmā.

*Dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te*: I give intelligence by which the devotees come to Me. (BG, 10.10) Inspiring them with intelligence to attain You, and making them worship You, You reveal to them the goal of becoming an associate with *prema*.

This book contains the condensed teachings and wisdom from the most exalted *śikṣā-gurus* in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, directly related to *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

## The purpose of this book

The primary focus of this book is the study of the processes involved in the realization and manifestation of a person's eternal spiritual identity and bodily form in a relationship with Kṛṣṇa in His *līlā*. As such, in this book I have attempted to present a thorough analysis of *rāgānugā-bhakti* and its *sādhana* and *bhajana*. The focus is specifically on the last five stages of development, namely, *anartha-nivṛtti*, *niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, *āsakti*, and *bhāva*, leading to the goal, *prema*.

Make no mistake about it – there are specific detailed processes. To achieve the goal of direct association with Kṛṣṇa in Goloka, in any of the four primary *rasas* – *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and

especially *mādhurya*, all Caitanya Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas will necessarily tread this path. The *ācāryas*' writings about this subject generally do not include *śānta-rasa*, so I have not included it. There are no recommendations to follow a Vraja associate who is in *śānta-rasa*. They discuss the four main *rasas*, but they focus primarily on *mādhurya-rasa*, which is a more detailed process than the other *rasas*. In any case, the same essential principles apply to attaining all *rasas*.

The identity transformation process itself is intrinsic to the final five of the eight progressive steps on the path of *bhakti*. Many devotees do not understand that *anartha-nivṛtti* is in fact an on-going process that begins taking effect during the stage of *bhajana-kriyā* and is fully complete only when one attains *prema*. This will be corroborated in full detail in Chapter 4.

Thus, the preliminary stages of *śraddhā* (faith), *sādhū-saṅga* (association with Vaiṣṇavas), *bhajana-kriyā* (engaging in *sādhana-bhakti*) and the initial stages of *anartha-nivṛtti* (removal of impediments to progress) are the preparatory steps. They lead directly to the pivotal transitional point in the overall process of realizing and manifesting your eternal identity, transcendental form, and relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

The process entails the gradual development and awakening of your eternal identity over the course of progress through the final five stages, and it is clearly presented in numerous books by the Six Gosvāmīs, especially Rūpa Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, as well as Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī, Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and others. What better sources and *śikṣā-gurus* could one hope for?

I have done my best to extract the essence of this knowledge and to organize, analyze and present it in a clear, systematic way, for the benefit of serious Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practitioners who have an interest in, or a need for, this essential esoteric and confidential knowledge.

Knowing that most devotees won't have the time to read all of these books, especially in a condensed period of time, I have intentionally quoted many lengthy but fully relevant sections from these books. This was done to substantiate and expand upon my statements and conclusions, as well as to allow readers to hear directly from these *ācāryas* in their own distinct writing voices, which are full of nectar and illumination. This also allows readers to get a better sense of these *ācāryas* as the unique individual Vaiṣṇavas they were, by hearing their personal perspectives on these important details.

In that sense, this book is also a summary study of all these referenced works, insofar as they relate to the primary subject matter – *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Think of it as having private *sādhū-saṅga* with these exalted individuals all at the same time, discussing the same subjects together. It is a rare and worthwhile opportunity, not to be missed, nor taken lightly.

The Six Gosvāmīs and their contemporaries are our direct sources for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings, and they have covered the full scope of all things related to *bhakti*. Within that vast realm of knowledge lies the crest jewel of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, which is the only means to enter Vraja *nitya-līlā*. Therefore, in this book I will be distilling that particular essence from the works of these *ācāryas*, and using that as the basis for my analysis.

I can't say that I've read every article or book by contemporary Vaiṣṇavas, but having reviewed numerous presentations and discussions about *rāgānugā-bhakti* and entering *nitya-līlā*, it is blatantly obvious that there is widespread misunderstanding about this subject matter. By a systematic and thorough analysis of the previous *ācāryas'* books, the misinformation and misunderstandings will be resolved.

According to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (*Jaiva-dharma, Harināma-cintāmaṇi*), there are five phases in the progressive evolution of one's eternal identity, and the first phase is called, *śravaṇa-daśā*, i.e., hearing about these specific details to understand fully about the final phases of devotional evolution to perfection – *prema*. This book is also a compilation and analysis of the extensive details available from the *ācāryas* related to the phase of *śravaṇa-daśā*.

### Who should read this book?

First and foremost, this book is intended specifically for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, regardless of their lineage or organizational affiliation. I humbly offer this book to the entire worldwide Caitanya Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community.

However, this book is not an introductory presentation of *bhakti* for people who are not yet Vaiṣṇavas. Nor is it for devotees who are inexperienced neophytes (*kaniṣṭhā*) with little *sāstric* knowledge, weak faith (*śraddhā*) and lacking in realizations. People who fall into these two categories should not read this book until they have acquired sufficient knowledge and realizations to prepare them for this information.

This book does not contain discussions about the confidential aspects of *mādhurya-rasa*, rather, the discussions focus on the processes related to entering that *līlā*, i.e., the qualifications, knowledge, practices and techniques of the internal aspects of *rāgānugā-bhajana*. Therefore, persons who have no attraction for, or interest in these topics should not read this book.

There are eight progressive stages of development on the path of *bhakti*, whether one is following the path of *vaidhī-bhakti* or *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Both paths lead to *prema*, although as we will learn, there are different grades of *prema*. Both paths do not lead to Vraja - only *rāgānugā-bhakti* gives one access to Vraja.

*śraddhā* – preliminary faith in Kṛṣṇa and the process of *bhakti*

*sādhu-saṅga* – association with advanced Vaiṣṇava *sādhakas*

*bhajana-kriyā* – engaging in *sādhana-bhakti* and *guru-sevā*

*anartha-nivṛtti* – diminishing and eradication of activities and behaviors unfavorable to *bhakti*

*niṣṭhā* – unshakable faith and steadiness in *sādhana* and *bhajana*

*ruci* – experiencing a spontaneous taste and attraction for Kṛṣṇa from *sādhana* and *bhajana*

*āsakti* – deep attachment to Kṛṣṇa and immersion in chanting, hearing and *līlā-smaraṇam*

*bhāva* – awakening of *prema*, realization of your eternal identity and form, and direct *darsan* of Kṛṣṇa

These progressive stages lead to the goal...

*prema* – direct involvement internally in the eternal *līlā* while developing the first stages of *prema*

Devotees who are progressing through the beginning stages of *śraddhā* and *sādhu-saṅga*, are at a point on the path of *bhakti* that is not suitable for receiving the most benefit from the subject matters discussed in this book. One should first have a solid and mature foundation in understanding the true nature of one's eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa (*sambandha*), the processes to attain that relationship (*abhidheya*), and the ultimate goal of pure love of Kṛṣṇa – *prema* (*prayojana*).

This book is primarily for serious practitioners who have been engaged in hearing and chanting for many years, along with other elements of *sādhana-bhakti*, and who have studied and understood the *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Those who have also studied the major writings of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, especially the books I will be recommending further on, should be acquainted with this knowledge.

Those who are at the stages of *bhajana-kriyā* and *anartha-nivṛtti*, and who are struggling with maintaining steady *sādhana* and *bhajana* in their lives, will get an impetus from reading this book. Hopefully, it will inspire them to intensify and accelerate their progress towards the stage of *niṣṭhā*, so they can begin to effectively utilize the information found herein.

For persons who have genuinely acquired spiritual greed (*lobha*) and are highly motivated, seriously and steadily engaged in daily *sādhana* and *bhajana*, reading this book will surely help intensify their *bhajana* and progress and bring great joy to their hearts.

### **This book will likely be considered controversial**

Given the varied mentalities of the growing worldwide Vaiṣṇava community, it is certain that some people will consider this book to be controversial on so many levels, and for so many reasons. My intentions are not to create controversy, but to study and comprehend these philosophical and instructional details as presented by the previous Gauḍīya *ācāryas*, and even attempt to resolve some of the existing issues.

All throughout Gauḍīya Vaisnava history, each generation of Vaiṣṇavas has had to deal with multiple controversial issues related to Gauḍīya philosophy and its practical applications. You can see it everywhere in the writings of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Śrīla Prabhupāda. Envious *brāhmaṇas* even tried to kill Viśvanātha Cakravartī – in Vṛndāvana no less!

Not surprisingly, the current global Vaiṣṇava situation is no different, and perhaps even worse than ever. We live in amazing and unprecedented times, where everyone around the world can post their thoughts in public for all to see, and engage freely and openly in discussions with others, without fear of censorship. The worldwide Vaiṣṇava community has fully embraced and exploited these opportunities for better or worse. In addition to studying the books of our *ācāryas*, I took advantage of this unique set of circumstances to tap into the mindsets of a cross section of Vaiṣṇavas. I spent countless hours reading online discussions and articles about these subjects. An eye-opening experience to say the least, and not all pleasant.

As a result, and after much thoughtful consideration and prayer, I am thoroughly convinced that the specific knowledge in this book cannot be properly presented and understood in the current Vaiṣṇava community without dealing with all of these issues head on.

This book contains the highest knowledge from our Gauḍīya *ācāryas*, and it is very confidential and absolutely essential. I didn't want to take a chance and hope that others will understand and see through the multiple layers of confusion that exist. That would be a flawed and incomplete approach to accomplishing this task.

I will discuss a few important issues here in the **Introduction** and the rest will be dealt with in the book as they relate directly to the subjects being presented. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas should always desire to know the truth about all things relevant to our spiritual legacy of Caitanya Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

Here are words of wisdom from *Jīva Gosvāmī*, from the **Introduction** of another controversial book, *In Vaiṣṇava Not Even the Leaves Fall*:

In the *Prīti-sandarbhā*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains why [controversies won't end]. He says there are three types of discussions – *vāda*, *jalpa*, and *vitaṇḍā*.

In a *vāda* discussion the motive of all concerned is to find out the truth. This is the ideal kind of discussion. It is for persons who are sober and impartial about the outcome; they simply want to know what is the truth of the matter. They are in the mode of goodness.

*Jalpa* is a discussion wherein one is not interested in what is said by others, whether it has some truth or all of the truth, because one simply wants to be heard. Any other view or contribution is of no interest. This is the way for a person in the mode of passion.

A *vitaṇḍā* discussion is in the mode of ignorance. In this version the truth is of no value. One simply wants to win at all costs. We believe that this book will clear the confusion for those persons interested in *vāda*. IVNELF, Introduction, Page 2

## Śrīla Prabhupāda said: “Everything you need is in my books.”

This is a sensitive subject to broach, but because it will most certainly become an aspect of the discussions provoked by this book, I have chosen to deal with this topic in the **Introduction** to resolve it conclusively, so that readers who are disciples or followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda can move forward without any doubts or concerns in this matter.

The phrase, “Śrīla Prabhupāda said...” is used so frequently that it has become somewhat of a verbal device meant to convey final and absolute authority. But much more important than what “Śrīla Prabhupāda said” is, “what did Śrīla Prabhupāda really *mean*, or intend to convey?” That also includes, who was the intended recipient of the statement, and what were the circumstances? All such factors are equally relevant and must be considered collectively to establish the correct understanding.

Everyone understands that disciples cannot always know the mind of their *guru* with precise certainty. Nonetheless, each disciple’s personal connection and relationship with his or her *guru* provides a unique and direct channel for understanding all matters more deeply. No other intermediaries are required and there is no hierarchy in-between that relationship – it is direct, eternal and exclusive of all other disciples of that *guru*. With that in mind, let’s continue the current discussion.

What did Śrīla Prabhupāda mean when he said, “Everything you need is in my books”? Did he mean there was absolutely no additional knowledge available or necessary for the processes of *bhakti*? Did he mean or imply that because his books had “everything,” therefore, no one should study any other books of the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, and only read his books exclusively – forever – no exceptions? Is it *guru-aparādha* to read the books of the other Gauḍīya *ācāryas*? If disciples read the books of the previous *ācāryas* will they be condemned by their *guru*?

Of course not. None of these notions are valid. These ideas are patently absurd and without any precedent in Vaiṣṇava tradition. Yet, many devotees are still afflicted by these ridiculous misconceptions and believe them to be true.

Śrīla Prabhupāda discusses studying the books of the previous *ācāryas* in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

A sincere student should not neglect the discussion of such conclusions [about Kṛṣṇa], considering them to be controversial, for such discussion strengthens the mind. Thus, one’s mind becomes attached to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. CC, 1.2.117

From Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Purport:

False devotees, lacking the conclusion of transcendental knowledge, think that artificially shedding tears will deliver them. Similarly, other false devotees think that studying books of the previous *ācāryas* is unadvisable, like studying dry empiric philosophies. But Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, following the previous *ācāryas*, has inculcated the conclusions of the scriptures in the six treatises called the *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhās*. False devotees who have very little knowledge of such conclusions fail to achieve pure devotion for want of zeal in accepting the favorable directions for devotional service given by self-realized devotees.

Clear, concise and unambiguous words directly from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Consider this: If Śrīla Prabhupāda had stayed with us for another ten years, does anyone think he would have stopped translating books after finishing the *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*? Absolutely not. He said as much numerous times, and even stated that he wanted his disciples to translate the books of the previous *ācāryas*. And his disciples have been doing that translation work, much of it authorized and published by Śrīla Prabhupāda's own BBT.

In London, in 1969, on the appearance day of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke on his life and teachings:

“So Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura happens to be an *ācārya*, one of the *ācāryas*. And he left behind him many books – *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*, *Jaiva-dharma*. These are very important books. They're in Bengali and Sanskrit... So we are trying to present Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's books also in an English translation. Gradually you will get them.”

Also, does anyone believe that the details in the books of the Six Gosvāmīs and other *ācāryas* are extraneous or superfluous, containing nothing new or more detailed than what is in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, and therefore, not worth studying? Hopefully not.

All that being said, it is true that Śrīla Prabhupāda stated in various letters, lectures and conversations – “don't read other books” – just his books. However, in light of the above clarifications directly from Śrīla Prabhupāda, if we examine each of those statements about not reading other books, it becomes very obvious that they were all instructions according to those specific times and circumstances (involving foolish, young, neophyte disciples), and not meant to be established as eternal Vedic edicts or irreversible mandates.

The proof of that is found again in Śrīla Prabhupāda's own words. After saying several times throughout the previous years, not to read any other books but his, here's what he then said on a morning walk, May 13, 1975, Perth, Australia:

Paramahansa: Śrīla Prabhupāda, I remember once I heard a tape where you told us that we should not try to read the books of previous *ācāryas*.

Prabhupāda: Hmm?

Amogha: That we should not try to read Bhaktivinoda's books or earlier books of other, all *ācāryas*. So I was just wondering...

Prabhupāda: **I never said that.**

Amogha: You didn't say that? Oh.

Prabhupāda: How is that?

Amogha: I thought you said that we should not read the previous *ācāryas'* books.

Prabhupāda: **No, you should read.**

Amogha: We should.



Prabhupāda: **It is misunderstanding.**

Paramahansa: I think maybe he was thinking that there was some things about some of the Gauḍīya Matha books.

Prabhupāda: Maybe.

Paramahansa: And sometimes you said that better not to, better to read your books.

Amogha: When the devotees went to India this year, they said that Acyutananda Svāmi very, chastised them that “You should never... If I catch any of you buying Bhaktisiddhanta’s books from Gauḍīya Matha then I will take them away.” Something like this.

Paramahansa: Yeah, that was, the reason was because of, he didn’t want the devotees going to Gauḍīya Matha. But there’s nothing wrong with the idea of studying the previous *ācāryas*’ books.

Prabhupāda: **No. Who said? That is wrong. We are following previous *ācāryas*. I never said that.**

Paramahansa: All of your commentaries are coming from the previous *ācāryas*.

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Jayadharma: But that wouldn’t mean that we should keep all the previous *ācāryas*’ books and only read them.

Prabhupāda: That is already there. You first of all assimilate what you have got. You simply pile up books and do not read – what is the use?

Jayadharma: First of all we must read all your books.

Prabhupāda: Yes .

Paramahansa: Practically speaking, Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are giving us the essence of all the previous *ācāryas*’ books in your books.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Yes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements in the above conversation effectively neutralize any other contrary quotes that may be found in the Vedabase. This represents his final conclusion on the matter. There is no way to spin this otherwise.

Anyone who has watched Siddhānta dāsa’s numerous Prabhupāda Memories videos, has seen over and over again how Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared to contradict himself when giving instructions to his disciples. Of course, the truth is that he wasn’t really contradicting himself, he was simply giving appropriate instructions according to time and circumstance and the specific individual he was dealing with.

The above morning walk conversation perfectly exemplifies this. Even though he is on record numerous times saying not to read other books, he bluntly and firmly says, “I never said that.” and, “It is misunderstanding.” and, “No, you should read.”

There is no example whatsoever in Vaiṣṇava history of *ācāryas* forbidding their disciples from reading the previous *ācāryas'* books. That would be against all Vaiṣṇava principles regarding honoring and studying the teachings of the previous Gauḍīya *ācāryas*. It is the entire foundational basis of the idea of disciplic succession – *paramparā*.

So which instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda are to be followed? To read or not to read? Because he said he was planning to translate many of those books, it is obvious that he wanted us to read them, *after* reading and understanding his books of course. Simple common sense, devoid of fundamentalism and fanaticism.

### Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Don’t supersede your guru.”

There is a verse and purport by Śrīla Prabhupāda in the *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* that is likely to arise in discussions about this book, and it will almost certainly be used out of its original context or used only in part, as it has been repeatedly in the past. I am including it here in its entirety so readers will understand the conditions of its proper application. Here is the verse and purport from the *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*.

Śrī Uddhava said: You may take lessons from the great learned sage Maitreya, who is nearby and who is worshipable for reception of transcendental knowledge. He was directly instructed by the Personality of Godhead while He was about to quit this mortal world. SB, 3:4:26

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Purport:

Although one may be well versed in the transcendental science, one should be careful about the offense of *maryada-vyatikrama*, or impertinently surpassing a greater personality. According to scriptural injunction one should be very careful of transgressing the law of *maryada-vyatikrama* because by so doing one loses his duration of life, his opulence, fame and piety and the blessings of all the world.

To be well versed in the transcendental science necessitates awareness of the techniques of spiritual science. Uddhava, being well aware of all these technicalities of transcendental science, advised Vidura to approach Maitreya Ṛṣi to receive transcendental knowledge. Vidura wanted to accept Uddhava as his spiritual master, but Uddhava did not accept the post because Vidura was as old as Uddhava’s father and therefore, Uddhava could not accept him as his disciple, especially when Maitreya was present nearby.

The rule is that in the presence of a higher personality one should not be very eager to impart instructions, even if one is competent and well versed. So Uddhava decided to send an elderly person like Vidura to Maitreya, another elderly person, but he was well versed also because he was directly instructed by the Lord while He was about to quit this mortal world.

Since both Uddhava and Maitreya were directly instructed by the Lord, both had the authority to become the spiritual master of Vidura or anyone else, but Maitreya, being elderly, had the first claim to becoming the spiritual master, especially for Vidura, who was much older than Uddhava.

One should not be eager to become a spiritual master cheaply for the sake of profit and fame, but should become a spiritual master only for the service of the Lord. The Lord never tolerates the impertinence of *maryada-vyatikrama*.

One should never pass over the honor due to an elderly spiritual master in the interests of one's own personal gain and fame. Impertinence on the part of the pseudo spiritual master is very risky to progressive spiritual realization.

From this purport it is more than clear that this principle applies to devotees who are contemporaries, and it does not exclusively apply to *gurus* and their disciples, but to the spiritual community of Vaiṣṇavas in general. It is a matter of Vaiṣṇava etiquette. Because Śrīla Prabhupāda is no longer physically present this principle is not applicable to his disciples or what is presented in this book.

Another important point to consider is that there is no mandate or suggestion in any Vaiṣṇava literature that disciples are forbidden from presenting additional information or alternative perspectives beyond those presented by their *guru*, especially if those perspectives and knowledge are perfectly aligned with the previous *ācāryas* and Vaiṣṇava *śāstra*. There are no examples of the disciples of previous *ācāryas* limiting themselves solely to what their *guru* taught and nothing more. Quite the contrary.

In fact, it is the duty of the disciples to carry on the mission and teachings of their *guru* by expanding upon them through studying and presenting the knowledge given by the previous *ācāryas*, just as Śrīla Prabhupāda and all of our predecessor *ācāryas* did. That is the test of all contemporary Vaiṣṇava literature – whether or not it is fully in sync with the *ācāryas*. That is the essence of the integrity of *paramparā*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks about his disciples writing books:

You ask one question about the nature of books I want you to write as my disciples; on this point, Kṛṣṇa Consciousness is not limited. Persons like all of the Gosvāmīs wrote so many books, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, and all the *ācāryas* wrote books, and still I am writing books. Similarly, also my disciples will write. So any self-realized soul can write unlimited books without deviating from the original ideas. Letter to Satsvarupa, Feb 28, 1972

From *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

This incident has been described in detail by Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura. Therefore, I have described it only in brief. CC, 2.12.150

Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport:

This is a matter of etiquette. If a previous *ācārya* has already written about something, there is no need to repeat it for personal sense gratification or to outdo the previous *acarya*. Unless there is some definite improvement, one should not repeat.

Let me state for the record, that my purpose in writing this book is not to make money from book sales, which is why I have made this book freely available to all Vaiṣṇavas. I also have no intentions of using this book as a platform to establish myself as a *dīkṣā-guru* and accept disciples. Nor am I trying to surpass any *ācāryas* and their presentations, nor to improve upon them. It is my sincere Vaiṣṇava *sevā* and *guru sevā*.

### Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings on *rāgānugā-bhakti* and the previous *ācāryas*

I want to address this important issue in the beginning and outside of the book proper. It would be counterproductive to constantly compare what Śrīla Prabhupāda said to what the previous *ācāryas* said and try to resolve every single apparent issue. That is not one of the purposes of this book. It would be extremely distracting to the flow of comprehension once we begin examining the details of *rāgānugā-bhakti* and the realization of your eternal identity.

As stated earlier, the knowledge and analysis in this book is based directly on the books of Sanātana Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, along with several others. I will compare and explore these *ācāryas'* writings on every facet of the processes under discussion, which will provide several perspectives to broaden our understanding.

In my presentation I will introduce details not presented in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, and I will expand on some of the aspects he did discuss. In some cases Śrīla Prabhupāda's translations and explanations may appear to be out of sync with the previous *ācāryas*. Most of these differences won't be addressed individually during the general discussion, but some key ones will be analyzed, such as those relating to one's *siddha-deha* – one's mentally conceived, spiritually perfect body for service within the mind (*mānasi-sevā*) while meditating on Kṛṣṇa's daily pastimes (*aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇam*).

It is understood that other disciples and followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda will compare what is presented herein to what he wrote, and this is certain to provoke some concern or disturbance or complaints. It's likely that some extremists and fundamentalists will accuse me of Vaiṣṇava *aparādha* or *guru aparādha*. I can assure all of the readers that there is no Vaiṣṇava *aparādha* or *guru aparādha* perpetrated within the pages of this book. Of that I am absolutely certain.

That is precisely why I wanted to address this issue in the **Introduction**. I want to present my personal perspective and realizations, having offered prayers and inquiries to Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda and my *śikṣā-gurus*, the previous *ācāryas*, asking for clarity and understanding. The connections and relationships between disciples and their *gurus* are direct, through the heart,

and not solely limited to, or bound by, the *gurus'* writings. Such relationships are fully transcendental and beyond all material considerations or limitations.

Vaiṣṇavas understand that the strength and integrity of the principle of disciplic succession (*paramparā*) lies in the fact that each generation of *ācāryas* maintains the essential teachings and conclusions of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, without altering them in any fundamental way. *Ācāryas* in each generation may change some details related to the practical application and implementation of the principles of *bhakti*, but they do so without changing the core truths (*tattvas*) and conclusive understandings thereof (*siddhāntas*).

In a purport in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabhupāda reveals some of his insights on spreading the path of *bhakti-yoga* around the world, along with some of his considerations for making practical adjustments:

To broadcast the [path] of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one has to learn the possibility of renunciation in terms of country, time and candidate. A candidate for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Western countries should be taught about the renunciation of material existence, but one would teach candidates from a country like India in a different way.

The teacher (*ācārya*) has to consider time, candidate and country. He must avoid the principle of *niyamagraha* – that is, he should not try to perform the impossible. What is possible in one country may not be possible in another. The *ācārya's* duty is to accept the essence of devotional service. There may be a little change here and there as far as *yukta-vairāgya* (proper renunciation) is concerned. CC, 2.23.105, Purport

There are some Vaiṣṇavas who criticize Śrīla Prabhupāda's translations, philosophical commentaries and teachings, and one primary focus of their complaints is that he didn't present an accurate or comprehensive understanding of *rāgānugā-bhakti* and its internal processes. They speculate that he did this because he either didn't understand it properly, or he altered it for unknown or even questionable reasons. This is then interpreted by these critics as a serious defect and deviation from traditional Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and the teachings of its *ācāryas*.

To resolve these issues harmoniously, we first have to examine the unique circumstances surrounding Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission. In a little over ten years, Śrīla Prabhupāda spread Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's message over the entire world, supported by a powerful and substantial literary foundation, and an extensive global network of teaching centers, temples and followers. An astonishing, divinely empowered accomplishment, by any measure. For the first time, millions of people worldwide have been given access to Kṛṣṇa by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's causeless mercy, through Śrīla Prabhupāda's endeavors.

Although Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mercy is unrestricted and meant for all fallen souls, one of the esoteric purposes for His appearing was to spread knowledge of, and give access to, the most confidential aspect of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* namely, *mādhurya-rasa*. No other incarnation of Kṛṣṇa had ever revealed such confidential knowledge.

Unfortunately, but quite understandably, very few people in this world are genuinely qualified to hear about these confidential matters. Even among Vaiṣṇavas such qualified devotees are also

very rare as we will learn. Nevertheless, being unlimitedly magnanimous, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu distributed His mercy without apparent restrictions, as did his succession of followers, including Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Imagine the daunting challenge that Śrīla Prabhupāda faced alone, in spreading this knowledge outside of India. His prospective audience was living in a world where sexuality, animal slaughter and sense gratification were out of control. How do you tell these extremely conditioned souls about such confidential knowledge? Quite obviously you don't. And you're not supposed to either.

You can give the general mass of people a vast amount of information to get them acquainted with basic Vedic knowledge and get them started on the path of *bhakti*, but you cannot freely reveal these very esoteric and confidential subject matters to anyone without discretion. All of the previous *ācāryas* have warned against doing that. Qualifications are required, and I will discuss those in detail throughout the book.

As it turns out, some of that confidential knowledge is intertwined within the very books that also contain the general levels of knowledge, such as *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. In addition, for the most part, these potential new candidates for *bhakti* had no background or foundation in any Vedic knowledge, thus adding to the formidable nature of the challenge confronting Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in a purport in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

In promoting the cause of Mahāprabhu an *ācārya* should not be expected to conform to a stereotype. Every *ācārya* has a specific means of propagating his spiritual movement with the aim of bringing [people] to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, the method of one *ācārya* may be different from that of another, but the ultimate goal is never neglected. CC, 1.7.37

Śrīla Prabhupāda was fully aware of the many aberrant versions of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings that have manifested over centuries in India. As such, he was more than justified for being concerned that young, unqualified neophyte followers from many different world cultures could easily wreak havoc with this confidential knowledge without proper guidance and without being qualified by deep realized understanding, developed over years of devotional practice and service.

Because of these unprecedented circumstances, Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, presented some information in a veiled way that gave a broad perspective of some of the details of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, but not the full scope, as we will see from the previous *ācāryas'* writings on this subject. He also raised the threshold for entry to some aspects of the practice of *rāgānugā-sādhana* as a deterrent to people who might otherwise be tempted to prematurely venture into areas they were not eligible to comprehend.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains this approach and its reasoning in *Jaiva-dharma*:

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* is a *tattva-śāstra*, but it is also an ocean of *rasa*. From the point of view of the *rasika-bhaktas*, *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* is filled with the complete deliberation on *rasa-tattva*, as if an ocean were contained in a single jar.

Śrī Rādhā's name and the *bhāvas* and identities of all the *gopīs* have been described there in a highly confidential way. If you reflect thoroughly upon the *ślokas* of the Tenth Canto, you can find everything. Śrī Sukadeva Gosvāmī has described this subject in a confidential way to keep unqualified people at a distance.

Vijaya, what will be the result of giving chanting beads and full and explicit descriptions to one and all? The reader can understand the confidential topics only as far as his conceptions are advanced.

Therefore, one quality of a genuine *pandita* is that he can reveal in a hidden way, subjects that are not fit to be revealed in the presence of everyone. Qualified people understand them only as far as their *adhikāra* (qualification) allows. There is no knowledge of the factual *vastu* (spiritual reality) without *śrī-guru-paramparā*. JD, Chapter 32, Pages 702-703

Śrīla Prabhupāda obviously read *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* with the commentaries of Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī, as all serious Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas of his generation would have done. He studied and quoted from the commentaries of multiple *ācāryas* for his *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* purports, so there's no question that he had access and exposure to all of this knowledge.

And Prabhupada knew that if and when any of his disciples became qualified for a deeper understanding of these confidential matters of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, he and Kṛṣṇa would make the necessary arrangements to internally and externally guide those rare fortunate disciples.

With this broader perspective in mind it's easy to resolve any apparent contradictions and differences and not see them as flaws or faults. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī did the same thing in his own way while expanding his movement in India. Considering the magnitude of the success of both their efforts, it is more than obvious that Kṛṣṇa had everything to do with all of this as well, which is yet another powerful factor that cannot be minimized or ignored. All *prema-bhaktas* execute the will of Kṛṣṇa in their own unique individual ways, being personal agents of His mercy. Kṛṣṇa loves and encourages variety at every level.

The accepted Vaiṣṇava procedure for dealing with these discrepancies is as follows. If, for example, Sanātana Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura are in complete agreement with one another about a particular detail of *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana* or a specific translation, and Śrīla Prabhupāda is translating or saying something different about the same subject, the correct method for resolution is that the later *ācārya's* statements must be understood and resolved so as to be in sync with the previous *ācāryas* and not the other way around.

In other words, Śrīla Prabhupāda's, or anyone else's statements, should never contradict, change, replace or nullify the essence of what the previous *ācāryas* have all agreed upon. It doesn't work that way – ever. That is not the *paramparā* system.

From Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

The *paramparā* system does not allow one to deviate from the commentaries of the previous *ācāryas*. By depending upon the previous *ācāryas*, one can write beautiful commentaries. However, one cannot defy the previous *ācāryas*. CC, 1.7.134, Purport

I reject completely, any suggestion that Śrīla Prabhupāda made major mistakes or was uninformed. Therefore, I believe that his differing statements have to be examined and harmonized within the context of the time and circumstances with which he was dealing. This will ensure that they are compatible with the original teachings of the *ācāryas*. I will deal with this directly and in more detail in Chapter 5.

As we will consistently see, there is no facet of the subject matter of this book that the previous *ācāryas* left unexamined or wrote about in an obscure or confusing way. They were all very direct and extremely detailed in their analyses and explanations, with very little room for misinterpretation or distortion.

Taking full shelter of the *guru-paramparā*, readers will gain great insight into this confidential realm of knowledge and practice. This deeper understanding will then shed even more light on Śrīla Prabhupāda's writings on this subject and allow us to see how he truly revealed far more than most are aware.

## Quoting and other conventions used in this book

### Sanskrit quotes

As is the custom with all presentations of a philosophical nature, I have substantiated my assertions and conclusions with direct references from the writings of the Caitanya Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, as well as the accepted Vaiṣṇava *bhakti śāstras*.

However, I have not always quoted the full Sanskrit or Bengali of the texts used to validate the points being made. Only when the original Sanskrit or Bengali is specifically referenced, or otherwise relevant, will it be quoted along with the English translation. I will of course always give the appropriate author/book/chapter/verse/page references so readers can examine the original text if desired.

I chose to do this to avoid interrupting the visual flow of the presentation with numerous Sanskrit sections, because I have quoted rather extensively. It served no useful purpose to inflate the size of the book for that alone. The English translations are the most important part anyway,



and the fact is that only an extremely small percentage of readers will be conversant in Sanskrit and Bengali.

Not having access to a competent Sanskrit editor, I performed that function myself, and although the Sanskrit and Bengali are accurate, I'm sure there are still some missing diacritical marks. None of this affects the substance of the book in any way. My apologies in advance to the Sanskrit *panditas*.

### **Quoting the *ācāryas***

Because I have used extensive excerpts from the books of our *ācāryas*, I have decided to implement the method of indentation for these quotes. It serves to make a clear visual distinction between my writing and that of the *ācāryas*. Quotation marks are only practical for short quotes.

### **Translations**

I am not qualified to translate Sanskrit or Bengali. I have accessed currently available English translations of the *ācāryas*' books for this work. In most cases I have examined and compared several translations of these texts and I've chosen the renderings that I felt best conveyed the intended meaning of the author. Some may argue that because Sanskrit words can be translated in numerous contextual ways, certain translations may misrepresent the overall intended meaning. This is certainly a valid concern.

Certainly there will be some scholars who will find errors or other interpretations in the translations used herein, and that is to be expected. However, after exhaustive comparisons, I am confident that no major translation flaws exist in the renditions I have used, that would make a significant difference to the overall purport. The meanings are all clear and direct, with very little room, if any, for alternative interpretations that would lead to different conclusions. Most of these books and commentaries were not written in a cryptic way – on the contrary, they were written without ambiguity to be readily assimilated by all serious practitioners.

I have also been very careful to avoid quoting verses and commentaries out of context, as well as to avoid extracting small bits of verses or commentaries to suit a narrow or obscure understanding. In contrast, in most cases I've included lengthy commentary sections because they are so rich with directly relevant knowledge, and I want the readers to hear the unique voices of these *ācāryas* as they expound fully on subjects pertinent to the discussion at hand.

### **Sanskrit terms usage**

The entire original knowledge base of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is in Sanskrit or Bengali, and there are many terms that are used in their original language within translations. Many writers choose to use English translation equivalents instead of the original Sanskrit words, such as using the

term “devotional service” in place of *bhakti*, or mellow for *rasa*, or Śrīla Prabhupāda’s classic term for *bhakti* – Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Many of these words truly have no direct equivalent in English or other languages, so choosing one word or term is always a compromise at best. Then there’s the question of which of the many Sanskrit terms should be preserved when conveying esoteric knowledge such as found in this book, versus completely “modernizing and localizing” it for contemporary practitioners.

Dealing with too many Sanskrit terms can sometimes interrupt the flow of assimilation for a reader, because the collection of terms eventually becomes overwhelming and often confusing. Is it absolutely necessary to learn and memorize all of these ancient Sanskrit words just to become self-realized and realize God? These are valid conundrums.

To address all of these issues, I have chosen to use a specific mix of Sanskrit terms and their generally accepted English equivalents. The reasoning behind this particular approach is as follows. Understanding that some Sanskrit terms have no satisfactory equivalents, I have chosen to use the original Sanskrit because in the course of the discussions, the varied and nuanced meanings of these terms will become more and more apparent as the contextual knowledge unfolds around them, shedding different shades of revealing light.

Terms like *bhakti*, *bhāva* and *rasa* are the three most prominent terms that come to mind. *Bhakti* implies so much more than the two commonly used terms mentioned before. Both of those English terms are good but neither is complete. In this book, the term *bhakti* has many contextual variations and in my opinion I felt it was best to just leave it as is and let the context convey the intended meaning. Revelation also plays a big part in all of this, so that’s another unspoken but significant factor.

Another aspect of my methodology is that, in some cases, I have favored the English word with the Sanskrit term in parentheses and at other times I’ve done the reverse. When there are lists of items, I have generally favored English over the Sanskrit, but have included the Sanskrit in some cases where I felt it was good to know because you will read it later in the discussion. The underlying logic for my varied application of these choices was entirely intuitive, motivated by the desire to create an acceptable balance and a comfortable, smooth flowing mode of learning and assimilation.

Sanskrit is an ancient language but it’s still the most sophisticated and elevated language in the universe. The highest knowledge in all existence has been conveyed in Sanskrit. Sanskrit has been spoken or chanted every day on this planet for thousands and millions of years. It is an extremely beautiful language, both visually and aurally.

I feel it is beneficial for Vaiṣṇavas to learn and understand some core terms in the original Sanskrit because they serve their purpose much better than inadequate substitutes, and should therefore be preserved and understood, even within the context of modernizing and localizing this esoteric philosophy. Many translations of the *ācāryas*’ books use these Sanskrit terms throughout, so understanding them is beneficial for readers in general who wish to continue studying this subject matter. The fact is that English and other Indo-European languages already contain many words derived from Sanskrit, so a few more select terms added to the mix is good.

## Chapter 1 – Who Are You – Eternally?

### Who are you and how do you discover who you are?

How often have we heard or spoken the phrase, “You’re not that body. You’re a pure spirit soul.”? Or in *Sanskrit*, *aham brahmāsmi* – I am spirit (*brahman*).

That statement is certainly a fundamental and foundational truth, but even more specifically, on the deepest level it really implies, “You are not that temporary *identity*. You are an eternal personality who is a servant, or friend, or elder, or lover of Kṛṣṇa.” In other words, it’s not just about not misidentifying with the physical body, but even more importantly, it’s a case of mistaken identity – yours.

At what point on the path of *bhakti* should aspiring devotees begin to delve seriously into the subject of their eternal identity, and exactly how and when does that realization and transformation take place?

Does it just happen automatically and suddenly after decades of devotional service, while chanting *japa* one day? Is it purely an act of mercy by Kṛṣṇa, who will finally reveal it to you at some point in the future? Does it happen at the moment of death if you remember Kṛṣṇa as you are leaving your body?

And whoever, at the time of death, quits his body remembering Me alone, at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt. BG, 8.5

Some Vaiṣṇavas think that we have fallen from the eternal spiritual world and if we remember Kṛṣṇa at the time of death, we will simply assume our original spiritual bodies and begin our relationship with Kṛṣṇa where we left off before we fell from that realm. Is that true? If so, how and when do we “awaken” to our original identity? What do the *ācāryas* say about that?

Therefore Arjuna, you should always think of Me in the form of Kṛṣṇa, and at the same time carry out your prescribed duty of fighting. With your activities dedicated to Me and your mind and intelligence fixed on Me, you will attain Me without doubt. BG, 8.7

He who meditates on the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his mind constantly engaged in remembering Me, undeviated from the path, he, O Partha (Arjuna), is sure to reach me. BG, 8.8

Many Vaiṣṇavas are under the impression that attaining Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana is simply a matter of remembering Him at the time of death, regardless of one’s state of consciousness and stage of advancement on the path of *bhakti* at that moment. Ajāmila is the example most often cited, although he eventually attained Vaikuṅṭha, not Goloka Vṛndāvana.

Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail. BG, 8.6

These and many other questions will be answered in detail by examining the writings of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* during the course of our journey within this book.

## How the material body and identity are created

In the *Bhakti-tattva-kaumudi*, it is stated:

If, while occupying one body, a person meditates on a different type of body, he will attain a body like that. For example, after meditating on a deer, King Bharata obtained the body of a deer.

Understanding the process involved in the creation of different material bodies and identities, specifically a human body, will provide valuable insight into the process of manifesting one's eternal form and identity, because surprisingly, there are many parallels.

In material existence every living entity (*jīva*) acquires two bodies – the subtle astral body and the gross physical body. Since time immemorial the *jīva* has been covered by the subtle material body, which is never changed, and exists until the *jīva* is finally liberated. The subtle body evolves, but it's the same subtle body continuously, containing the *jīva*'s cumulative experiences, memories and impressions (*saṁskāras*).

The subtle body also contains the subtle senses, mind, intelligence and false ego. These elements are the inner components of an acquired material identity. The gross body is the physical form that has a gender, race, nationality, social reality, and so on. Generally, the subtle body integrates with and accepts the gender and circumstances of the physical body to form the composite identity and body.

The false ego is very flexible and malleable, because the embodied *jīva* doesn't have a specific gender per se. While in material existence, the eternal identity and form of the *jīva* are not manifest, and they exist in a dormant, unmanifest, seed-like state. This is because the eternally materially bound *jīvas* (*nitya-bandha*) have never had a fully manifest identity and form in the spiritual realm, as will be learned from the *ācāryas* at the end of this chapter.

The subtle body is where the convergent interactions of thinking, feeling and willing take place, fueled by endless desires. Desires are an inherent characteristic of a *jīva*, who is a reservoir of unlimited varieties of desires. These desires, when strong enough, compel the *jīva* to act in so many ways, thus, activating the *karmic* machine that is the enabling and controlling mechanism operating in the material world for *jīvas* with human bodies.

The bewildered *jīvas* become completely engrossed in their material identities and attached to their physical forms, which are the vehicles for fulfilling the constant flow of desires. All consciousness and life energy remains focused on the subtle body's endless machinations and subsequent actions for executing those plans for pleasure and happiness through the physical senses. This fixation and focus are a type of meditation that is energized by the deep attachments to the desired material objects.

This cycle will repeat eternally, body after body, until broken by a conscious determined effort on the part of the *jīva* after being enlightened by transcendental knowledge. There are different types of liberation, but for our journey, we are only concerned with attaining an eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana, which requires a suitable spiritual identity and form. How that eternal spiritual identity and form are realized and manifested is the focus of the study in this book.

Having understood the material process of identity creation, we will learn in our exploration that the internal processes (*bhajana*) of *rāgānugā-bhakti* are designed to guide practitioners in manifesting their spiritual identity and form using more or less the same conceptual processes that create a material body. Instead of a material subtle body, there is the *siddha-deha*, which is the mentally conceived, perfect spiritual form and identity necessary for beginning one's meditation on *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. These processes will be explored thoroughly in Chapter 5.

The false ego focuses our desires and actions on the self-interests of our material body, and that is the psychological mindset and consciousness which is the *karmic* glue – it causes the results of material activities to stick to us in the form of future *karmic* obligations.

It is desire alone, driven by a materially self-centered consciousness, that maintains our perpetual bodily connection to material existence. And it is that very same force of desire, along with a spiritual transformation in consciousness that will propel our extraction from this body and identity and the entire material sphere of existence. We literally have to desire our way out while constantly immersing ourselves in the highest spiritual consciousness.

That is precisely what is accomplished by the practice of *rāgānugā-sādhana* and *bhajana*. Practitioners immerse their consciousness in transcendental sound vibrations – *hari-nāma*, *mantras*, knowledge and *līlā* – all meant to focus their desires and attention on Kṛṣṇa, gradually leading to deep attraction, attachment and pure love – *prema*.

## The teachings of the previous *ācāryas*

Most Vaiṣṇavas understand that *bhakti* as a multi-faceted process for developing pure love (*prema*) for Kṛṣṇa. Inseparable from the development of *prema* is the realization and manifestation of one's eternal personal identity and bodily form, specifically in relation to Kṛṣṇa, and in the case of *mādhurya-rasa*, also in relation to Rādhā.

To say that the subject matter of this book is esoteric and confidential is a great understatement. With crystal clear comprehension and subsequent deep realizations of this knowledge, an aspiring devotee on the path of *bhakti*, *rāgānugā-bhakti* to be specific, will be very well prepared. The necessary qualifications will evolve naturally, facilitating one's entry into the most esoteric and exalted realm in existence, namely Kṛṣṇa's unmanifest eternal pastimes (*aprakāṣa-nitya-līlā*) in Vraja, Goloka Vṛndāvana.

By the unlimited generosity of the magnanimous Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, through the mercy of His associates, all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas have access to this knowledge. And by the causeless

compassionate mercy of one's *gurus*, both *dīkṣā* and *śikṣā*, that knowledge can be realized fully, and devotees can achieve their most cherished desires to enter into those pastimes in their chosen relationship, in ever expanding *prema-bhakti-rasa*.

Although I do quote a number of passages from the writings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, this book is based primarily on the knowledge and teachings found in the following books and commentaries of our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*:

Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsadeva – *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, with Śrīla Prabhupāda's commentaries

Sanātana Gosvāmī - *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*

Rūpa Gosvāmī – *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*, *Utkalikā-vallārī*, *Rādhā-kṛṣṇa-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā*

Jīva Gosvāmī – *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, *Prīti-sandarbhā*, *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbhā*, commentaries on *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī – *Manah-śikṣā*, *Śrī Vilāpa-kusumāñjalī*

Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī – *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī – *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Govinda-līlāmṛta*

Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura – *Prema-bhakti-candrikā*

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura – *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, *Sankalpa-kalpadrumah*, commentaries on *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* and *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura – *Jaiva-dharma*, *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*, *Bhajana-rahasya*

My spiritual master, *nitya-līlā pravistha Om Paramāhansa A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmi*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, introduced me to most of these books through his translations and commentaries of *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Nectar of Devotion (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu summary study)*, and other writings.

If not for his unexpected departure to enter Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes (*nitya-līlā*), it is certain that Śrīla Prabhupāda would have continued to benedict the world with more translations and commentaries of the books of the Six Gosvāmīs, as well as other Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* like Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. He said this numerous times in classes and conversations with his disciples.

Caitanya Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism's opulence is the blessing of an abundance of literature from many exalted *ācāryas*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's followers have distilled, analyzed and taught all aspects of transcendental knowledge related to Kṛṣṇa and the path of *bhakti*. The spiritual breadth and depth of this collection of works is unprecedented in human history.

But who has the time to sit and read so many books on a regular basis, what to speak of studying and analyzing them thoroughly? It's a daunting task and not easily done in today's

demanding, entangling and highly stressful world. And even if one had the time, where is the best place to start and what should be the focus of one's study, given the variegated and often complex information in those books?

I invite you to join me on a journey through these most prominent books of the Caitanya Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*. However, this is not an academic journey, nor a purely analytical one from an intellectual standpoint. It is a very focused journey as practitioners along a specific path toward the ultimate goal, as delineated in these writings.

It is a journey that leads directly to realization of your eternal identity and relationship with Kṛṣṇa. The focal point of our journey is *rāgānugā-bhakti*, its *sādhana* (external practices) and *bhajana* (internal practices), specifically in the context of the final five stages leading to *prema* – *anartha-nivṛtti*, *niṣṭhā*, *ruçi*, *āsakti* and *bhāva*.

These books contain a broad range of instructions for numerous levels of practitioners which may appear complicated and overwhelming. There are many types of *bhakti*, depending on the material condition of the practitioner, and what is appropriate for their individual situation. Not all instructions apply to all practitioners unilaterally. It is therefore advantageous to identify a specific focal point, with which, all of this information can be categorized, analyzed, processed and ultimately, applied. This also helps us filter out those things which are not relevant to our purposes.

Vaiṣṇavas who want to enter the unmanifest eternal pastimes (*aprakāṣa-nitya-līlā*) of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vraja, must follow the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, as that is the only means to access that highest realm. As we will clearly see, this is the conclusion of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, as well as the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* whose books are the subject of our study.

With *rāgānugā-bhakti* as our prime focus we can simplify our analysis of these books, by concentrating only on those things that relate to *rāgānugā-sādhana* and *bhajana*, and by setting aside that which relates indirectly or not at all. With that filter in place, the books can be seen in a cohesive way, and we can extract the essential elements to expand our comprehensive understanding of these esoteric subjects.

Let's begin by categorizing the books targeted for our studies. There are five distinct types of books as I have come to view them, notwithstanding some books that overlap categories. Grouping the books like this helps us understand how the *ācāryas* structured and presented their analyses for our benefit. These are the five categories of books:

**Source books:** The source books are the original *Vedic* writings like *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Mahābhārata*, *Purānas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Brahmā-saṁhitā* – the original, foundational, eternal Vedic knowledge, descending directly from Kṛṣṇa through Brahmā and Vyāsa. These books connect us to the eternal Vedic fountainhead of transcendental knowledge.

**Philosophical analysis:** These are books by the *ācāryas* that philosophically establish Kṛṣṇa and *bhakti* as preeminent in all spiritual matters, by analysis of these eternal source texts. Primary examples are the *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhas*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Jaiva-dharma*, and *Caitanya śikṣāmṛta*.

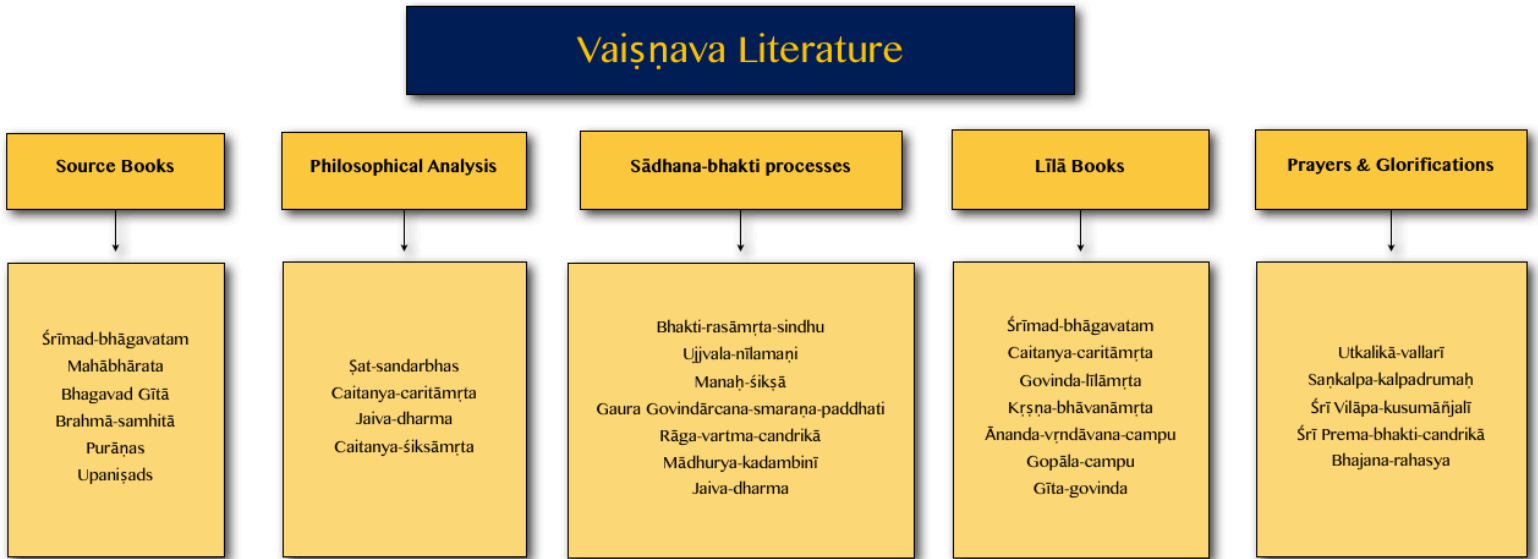
These philosophical analyses by the *ācāryas* provide us with the extracted essence from the source books, so our understanding is clear and solid.

**Principles & Processes of *sādhana-bhakti*:** Some books are focused on the principles and processes of *sādhana-bhakti*, which is the foundation of devotional life for a serious practitioner. These are books like, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*, *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, and *Jaiva-dharma*. The books that describe the details and processes of *sādhana-bhakti* clarify the paths to follow and all related instructions. These books are primarily concerned with the stages of progress on the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

**Līlā books:** Other books are based on Kṛṣṇa’s unlimited pastimes, which gives us direct access to the inner realm of Vraja and the relationships within the *līlā*. The major works are, *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Govinda-līlāmṛta*, *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta*, *Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campu*, *Gopāla-campu*, *Gīta-govinda*. These books give us direct access to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s personalities, the moods of the various *vraja-vāsīs*, and the confidential nature of their interactions.

**Prayers & glorifications:** These are books of prayers and glorifications to inspire and guide us with templates for our own prayers and meditations in *rāgānugā-bhajana*. Some well known examples are, *Utkalika Vallari*, *Sankalpa-kalpadrumah*, *Śrī Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*, *Manah-śikṣā*, *Śrī Prema-bhakti-candrikā*, and *Bhajana-rahasya*. These prayers of intense longing and glorifications reveal the esoteric aspects of internal *bhajana*, and provide examples for us to follow.

This then, is the framework and road map for our well defined journey of discovery and enlightenment.





## The progressive stages of *bhakti* from the top down

Contemporary Vaiṣṇavas have heard the phrase, “back to Godhead” countless times. It has become somewhat of a modern Vaiṣṇava slogan. Many devotees believe that if you just chant the Holy Names daily and render sincere service until you leave your body, remembering Kṛṣṇa, then you will automatically go back to Godhead and be with Kṛṣṇa. Just remember Kṛṣṇa at the time of death and it will all be taken care of, no matter what your condition or state of consciousness. Your material identity and body will end and you will be transferred to Vṛndāvana and mystically discover your eternal identity and relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

The actual qualifications and processes involved in going to Goloka Vṛndāvana and becoming one of the *vraja-vāsīs* are much more specific than that. Chanting, hearing and rendering service are certainly key parts of the *sādhana* one must perform, but it is ultimately not an external or mechanical process. It’s not about the quantity of *sādhana* activities, but rather the quality (sincerity and honesty), along with the internal development and subsequent transformations that take place.

To enter the eternal realm of Vraja, one must first attain the stage of *bhāva*, which is the preliminary stage of *prema*, and one must attain *bhāva* while still residing in the material body. Upon attaining *bhāva*, the culmination of *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*, one will also attain one’s desired eternal spiritual identity (*svarūpa-siddhi*), which is absolutely required to facilitate the initial development of *prema*.

*Prema* does not appear within the context of one’s material identity or body. *Prema* can only be developed and experienced by one who has established their eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa as a result of cultivating it constantly during the last stages of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. One’s relationship is established and cultivated *before* one reaches *bhāva*. Indeed, it is the very key to attaining *bhāva*.

*Prema* that follows the loving moods of a chosen *vraja-vasi* is the sole prerequisite for entering Vraja *līlā*. It doesn’t matter how much “service” we have rendered throughout our lives - if we haven’t developed *prema*, we are not fully qualified and we will not be allowed to enter Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā* after death. Thus, we must return again to complete our progress towards *prema*. *Bhakti* is perfected over the course of many lifetimes.

Nārada Muni explains to Gopa-kumāra in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

Such pastimes are also very pleasing for the Lord Himself. They delight the heart but can be perceived only if one possesses an exceptional kind of affection for the Lord. These pastimes are most confidential and are rarely attained even by sages like myself. Entrance into these pastimes can only be achieved by a powerful *prema* like that of the residents of Vraja. BB, 2.4.131

Sanātana Gosvāmī’s commentary:

Śrī Nārada says, “These enchanting, pleasurable pastimes bring the greatest happiness to the Lord as well. They can be witnessed only if one possesses extraordinary affection for the Lord. Certainly, even persons like me are also rarely privileged to experience these pastimes,

as they are amongst the most confidential of all.” He concludes, “These pastimes can be experienced only on the strength of the highest degree of *prema* like that of the most celebrated and glorious residents of Vraja.”

And there are also specific processes to attain *bhāva* and the realization of one’s eternal identity that all aspiring practitioners must learn. Nārada explains and Sanātana Gosvāmī elaborates:

The disciplines by which devotees in practice can reach Śrī Goloka – those very same disciplines let them see the Lord performing pastimes like those of Gokula, completely satisfied, in *vraja-bhūmi* in the mortal world. BB, 2.5.172

Sanātana Gosvāmī’s commentary:

To search out the Lord in Gokula, Gopa-kumāra need not go down to the earth, but he does need to learn the *sādhana*, the special practices, for attaining Kṛṣṇa’s personal abode. For intimate associates like Nanda Mahārāja no spiritual practice is needed, because they are eternal *vraja-vāsīs*. But for everyone else, careful endeavor is required.

On this path, not everyone attains the same level of success. A devotee may develop *bhakti* to the point of being able to see Kṛṣṇa but may not be able to see Him busily enjoying the special pastimes of Vṛndāvana with His intimate devotees.

When more advanced, a Vaiṣṇava may occasionally see Kṛṣṇa engaging in His Vṛndāvana pastimes but not displaying the full scope of His blissful enjoyment. And even such a Vaiṣṇava may not be fortunate enough to enter Kṛṣṇa’s eternal pastimes and play with Kṛṣṇa in absolute freedom. The highest perfection of *bhakti* is rarely achieved.

In order to understand this clearly, let’s take a brief look at the progressive process of *bhakti* from the end result or final goal, and work backwards to understand the successive stages from that unique reverse perspective. It is very revealing to examine it in this way. All of these stages are part of the subject matter of this book and they will be expanded in great detail through an in depth examination of the writings of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*. Here is a summary of that process.

The ultimate goal of *bhakti* is to establish a personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa (and Rādhā for *mādhurya-rasa*) in Goloka Vṛndāvana, Vraja, participating directly in Their unmanifest eternal pastimes, according to one’s desired relationship (*rasa*) and particular mood of love (*prema*). This is the highest and final goal.

To gain entry into this highest realm of the unmanifest eternal pastimes (*aprakāṣa-nitya-līlā*), one must first take birth from the womb of a *nitya-siddha gopī* in Kṛṣṇa’s manifest eternal pastimes (*prakāṣa-nitya-līlā*) on an earthly planet in a universe where they have begun another cycle of their eternal manifestation (*bhauma-līlā*). It is during this last birth where the final perfection of one’s *prema* and *rasa* evolves, through direct association with the *nitya-siddha* residents of Vraja and Kṛṣṇa. This is the last qualifying stage of refinement required for entering the *aprakāṣa-nitya-līlā*.

The qualification required to take birth in these manifest pastimes, is that one must first have reached the stage of *bhāva* as a result of one's intense *rāgānugā-sādhana* and *bhajana*. *Bhāva* is the stage where Kṛṣṇa at last reveals Himself directly, face to face, and He bestows the eternal transcendental relationship, identity and form that one has aspired for and cultivated intensely and constantly during one's *sādhana* and *bhajana*.

This is the first stage of complete perfection, and one is no longer considered an aspiring practitioner (*sādhaka*), because one has reached the desired goal (*sādhya*). This means that you have to realize your eternal identity while still embodied, in order to be qualified to take birth in Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes in your next life. It doesn't happen *after* death – it happens *before*.

*Bhāva* (a ray of *prema*) is also the stage from which *prema* begins to expand and intensify, while the devotee is still embodied. This *prema* develops internally within one's perfected spiritual form (*siddha-svarūpa*). However, the material body is not capable of tolerating the higher stages of *prema*, so at some point, when *prema* has reached this limit, by Kṛṣṇa's arrangement, the devotee finally discards the physical and subtle bodies and takes birth in *bhauma-līlā* to begin his or her eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

The stage immediately prior to *bhāva* is called, *āsakti* – intense attachment to Kṛṣṇa. Prior to *āsakti*, one will first pass through the stage of *ruci* – a deep taste for *bhajana* and everything related to Kṛṣṇa. Both of these stages are major transitional phases in one's progress on the path of *bhakti*, as they directly precede *bhāva*. They are, in fact, the same stage, the only differences being degrees of intensity and depth of realization. These two stages are characterized by intense, incessant chanting of *hari-nāma*, along with increasingly deeper and more frequent meditations on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes (*līlā-smaraṇam*).

To reach the stage of *ruci*, one must first attain *niṣṭhā* – firm faith and steadiness in *sādhana* and *bhajana*, which means you are immersed in *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, *smaraṇam*, *arcanam*, and so on. *Niṣṭhā* implies that *anartha-nivṛtti* – reduction of unfavorable behaviors and activities – has reached a stage of balance, where some *anarthas* remain, but they don't represent major impediments or stumbling blocks to one's steady progress. As we will learn from the *ācāryas*, *anarthas* may remain even up to the stage of *bhāva*.

During these stages, the process that is taking place internally is the gradual transformation and transition of our identity from one reality to another – from the temporary, false material ego to the eternal, real, perfect ego (*svarūpa-siddhi*). This transition starts when, having been blessed by the awakening of spiritual greed (*lobha*), one enters the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. This is also the stage where one learns about the processes involved in identity transformation – *śravaṇa-daśā*.

These are the external phases that one passes through as one evolves internally as a result of the potency of *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, and so on, imbued and fueled by spiritual greed in *rāgānugā-sādhana* and *bhajana*. This is the precise path described by all of the *ācāryas*.

There are of course, the preliminary stages starting with *śraddhā*, *sādhu saṅga* and *bhajana-kriyā*, but in this book we will focus on the later stages of progress, as those stages are where identity transformation takes place.

## **Śravaṇa-daśā – the first of the five phases of identity transformation**

Learning about and understanding the details related to one's eternal identity, and the transformative processes involved therein is called the stage of hearing – *śravaṇa-daśā*. This is not the *śravaṇa* of *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, *smaraṇam*. It refers to the first of five stages in the manifestation of one's eternal identity. One must first hear about this subject matter, as presented by the previous *ācāryas*, to learn the details and processes. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura describes these stages in both *Jaiva-dharma* and *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*:

As one progresses in the cultivation of one's spiritual identity, five stages are progressively crossed. These are:

- (1) the stage of hearing – *śravaṇa-daśā*
- (2) the stage of accepting – *varaṇa-daśā*
- (3) the stage of remembering – *smaraṇa-daśā*
- (4) the stage of adoption – *āpana-daśā*
- (5) the stage of full possession – *sampatti-daśā*

...When one hears these pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and becomes attracted to this particular mood, one must approach a genuine spiritual master to learn these eleven aspects (*ekadāśa-bhāvas*) of his spiritual identity (*siddha-deha*). Hearing the spiritual master delineate this identity in theory is called *śravaṇa-daśā*, the stage of hearing. HC, 15.59-60

I will present all relevant information related to the stage of *śravaṇa-daśā*, as presented by Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī in *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*, and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in *Jaiva-dharma* and *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*. The other four stages will also be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

More than anyone, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura put this information front and center in those two books. It is very confidential knowledge, but nonetheless, he wrote about it several times in his books. In those books, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura presents the five stages of progress that every Vaiṣṇava must go through as part of the transformation of one's identity, from being attached to the temporary, external material body and identity, to being fully manifest in one's eternal, spiritual form and identity, according to one's desired relationship with Kṛṣṇa in His eternal *līlā*.

The knowledge concerning the realization and manifestation of one's eternal identity is an integral part of understanding of the progressive stages of the path of *bhakti*, specifically *rāgānugā-bhakti*, as presented in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, and further elaborated in *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, *Jaiva-dharma*, as well as many other books.

This is because only by *rāgānugā-bhakti*, motivated by spiritual greed (*lobha*), can one gain entrance into Goloka Vṛndāvana and be awarded an eternal transcendental form and identity, to

participate in Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s eternal *līlā*. As we will learn, *vaidhī-bhakti* cannot qualify one to enter Goloka Vṛndāvana.

The eternal residents of Goloka are engaged in *rāgātmikā-bhakti*, and one who desires to gain entrance into that realm as an eternal associate, must follow in their footsteps by engaging in *rāgānugā-bhakti*, propelled by an intense, spontaneous desire. All of these points will be confirmed by the *ācāryas* as our journey progresses.

### The “origins of the *jīva*” debate – did we fall or not?

The subject of the spiritual origins of the souls – *jīvas* – within the unlimited material universes is a very controversial issue within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community. The debate centers on whether the *jīva* was originally in a relationship with Kṛṣṇa and engaged in pastimes (*līlā*) in an eternal spiritual body, and then somehow or other “fell down” from Goloka (or Vaikuṅṭha) into *māyā* in the material world, versus the *jīva* not having been in Goloka (or Vaikuṅṭha) originally.

In other words, the *jīvas* never had an active spiritual form and identity, or a direct relationship with Kṛṣṇa, and they are eternally conditioned (*nitya-baddha*) until they reach the platform of *prema* and thus, become qualified to participate in Kṛṣṇa’s eternal pastimes.

The controversy exists primarily because there are a number of statements made by Śrīla Prabhupāda which seem to imply that we were with Kṛṣṇa originally, participating in His *līlā*, but we left the spiritual world and forgot Him due to misuse of our independent free will. As such, many ISKCON devotees believe this is the truth.

In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda made many contradictory statements that appear to support both sides of the debate, such as:

After finishing their mock fighting, both the devotee and the Lord are again associated in the spiritual planets. That is very explicitly explained here. The conclusion is that no one falls from the spiritual world or Vaikuṅṭha planets, for it is the eternal abode. SB, 3.16.26, Purport

Regarding your second question, have the conditioned souls ever seen Kṛṣṇa? Were they with the Lord before being conditioned by the desire to lord it over material nature? Yes, the conditioned souls are parts and parcels of the Lord and thus, they were with Kṛṣṇa before being conditioned. Just as the child must have seen his father because the father places the child in the womb of the mother, similarly each soul has seen Kṛṣṇa or the Supreme Father. Letter to Jagadisha, Los Angeles, 4.25.70

Of course, a child in the womb doesn’t truly “know” who their father is, nor has that child actually “seen” their father. Such statements are thus, not conclusive nor self-evident. I’m not going to list all of Prabhupāda’s statements and analyze each one. There is a more expeditious and instructional way to deal with this issue that will result in everyone’s greater understanding.

Because we know that Śrīla Prabhupāda would never present any knowledge (*tattva*) or philosophical conclusions (*siddhānta*) that contradict the teachings of the previous *ācāryas*, we have to resolve these apparent differences in a way that is harmonious with the previous *ācāryas*' statements, all of which are completely in sync on this subject. This will shed the necessary light to help us understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements within that broader authoritative context.

It is more pragmatic and advantageous to examine what the previous *ācāryas* have stated, because they are the ultimate sources of Vaiṣṇava philosophy and related *śāstric* understanding, upon which Śrīla Prabhupāda based his entire writings, as their faithful transparent representative. Apparent contradictions must be resolved by examining everyone's relevant statements and deducing a coherent conclusion. That is the accepted process. Such conclusions will almost always then be self-evident.

I have yet to find one statement from any of the previous *ācāryas*' books or Vaiṣṇava *śāstra*, which directly indicates, or even remotely implies, that upon reaching full self-realization (*prema-bhakti*) one will “awaken” and/or “resume” one's eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa from where they left off before falling from Goloka or Vaikuṅṭha. Such statements do not exist in these texts. Quite the contrary in fact.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains the source of the *nitya-baddha jīvas* in *Jaiva-dharma*, Chapters 15 and 16, which conclusively establishes the truth (*tattva*) of the *jīva*'s origins:

Vrajanatha: So *māyā* has nothing whatever to do with creating the *svarūpa* of the *jīvas* – this has to be accepted. At the same time, I have also clearly understood that the *jīva* is by nature subject to the influence of *māyā*. Now I want to know, did the *cit-śakti* create the *jīvas* and give them their *taṭasthā-svabhāva* (marginal nature)?

Bābājī: No, the *cit-śakti* is *paripurna-śakti*, the complete potency of Kṛṣṇa, and its manifestations are all eternally perfect substances. The *jīva* is not *nitya-siddha*, although when he performs *sādhana*, he can become *sādhana-siddha* and enjoy transcendental happiness like the *nitya-siddhas*, eternally perfect beings. JD, Chapter 15, Page 358

*Jaiva-dharma*, Chapter 16, *Jīvas Possessed by Māyā*:

Bābājī: ...Innumerable *jīvas* appear from Śrī Baladeva Prabhu to serve Vṛndāvana-vihari Śrī Kṛṣṇa as His eternal associates in Goloka Vṛndāvana, and others appear from Śrī Sankarsana to serve the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha, Śrī Nārāyana, in the spiritual sky.

Eternally relishing *rasa*, engaged in the service of their worshipable Lord, they always remain fixed in their constitutional position. They always strive to please Bhagavān, and are always attentive to Him. Having attained the strength of *cit-śakti*, they are always strong.

They have no connection with the material energy. In fact, they do not know if there is a bewildering energy called *māyā* or not. Because they reside in the spiritual world, *māyā* is very far away from them and does not affect them at all.

Always absorbed in the bliss of serving their worshipable Lord, they are eternally liberated and are free from material happiness and distress. Their life is love alone, and they are not even conscious of misery, death or fear.

There are also innumerable, atomic, conscious *jīvas* who emanate as rays in Karanodakasayi Mahā-Viṣṇu's glance upon His *māyā-śakti*. Because these *jīvas* are situated next to *māyā*, they perceive her wonderful workings.

Although they have all the qualities of the *jīvas* that I have already described, because of their minute and marginal nature, they sometimes look to the spiritual world, and sometimes to the material world. In this marginal condition, the *jīva* is very weak because at that time he has not attained spiritual strength from the mercy of the object of his worship (*sevā-vastu*).

Among these unlimited *jīvas*, those who want to enjoy *māyā* become engrossed in mundane sense gratification and enter the state of *nitya-baddha*. On the other hand, the *jīvas* who perform *cid-anuśīlanam* of Bhagavān receive spiritual *śakti* (*cid-bala*) by His mercy, and enter the spiritual world. JD, Chapter 16, Page 377-378

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura thus dispels all doubts and confusion. The *jīvas* in the material world have originally emanated from Mahā-viṣṇu, as part of the marginal potency (*taṭasthā-śakti*), and some of them go directly to the spiritual realm, whereas others go directly to the material world. It's a simple as that. What more needs to be said?

Quite a bit apparently. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura wrote more on this subject in those two chapters, which expand greatly on these truths. Many other questions are answered there, such as:

Vrajanatha: Prabhu, I understand that this marginal position is situated in *taṭasthā-svabhāva*, or the junction, of the spiritual and material worlds. Why is it that some *jīvas* go from there to the material world, while others go to the spiritual world?

Vrajanatha: Kṛṣṇa is *karunāmaya* (full of mercy), so why did He make the *jīva* so weak that he became entangled in *māyā*?

Vrajanatha: Why must the *jīvas* suffer for the sake of Bhagavān's pastimes?

Vrajanatha: What harm would there have been if the *jīva* had not been given independent desire? Kṛṣṇa is omniscient, and He gave this independence to the *jīvas*, even though He knew that they would suffer on account of it, so isn't He responsible for the *jīva*'s suffering?

Vrajanatha: Is *māyā-śakti* the cause of our misfortune then? Would the *jīvas* have had to suffer like this if the omnipotent and omniscient Śrī Kṛṣṇa had kept *māyā* away from them?

I decided not to quote the entire lengthy section above from *Jaiva-dharma*, because it is beyond the scope of this book to delve into the those topics in that much detail, but a sample has been given to bring attention to the knowledge available on this subject. Rest assured that none of the answers to those questions has anything to do with the *jīvas* waking up and reactivating their

original spiritual body, or re-engaging in the *līlā* where they left off. All Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas should carefully and thoroughly study *Jaiva-dharma*.

Every single description from the *ācāryas'* writings about a devotee's entry into Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes (*nitya-līlā*) indicates a new beginning, including first taking birth from a Vraja *gopī* in Kṛṣṇa's earthly pastimes (*bhauma-līlā*), where the *jīva* obtains the necessary social context (*abhimāna*) for their "new" identity – parents, siblings, husband, village of birth, social status, and so on. As we will learn, it is in that final birth that the realized *jīvas* perfect the higher stages of their *prema*, thus becoming fully qualified to enter the eternal pastimes in Goloka in the transcendental realm (*aprakāṣa-nitya-līlā*).

If we are simply resuming our original relationship from where we left off, then what is the need for taking birth again in the *līlā*, if we supposedly already existed there before? Or what is the need for further training and development under the guidance of a Vraja associate as is always recommended? If we are just "waking up from being asleep in *māyā*" why wouldn't we just pick up where we left off in the same condition as when we left, fully reinstated in our original situation and fully conscious of our previous identity, relationship and service?

In Kṛṣṇa Book, Śrīla Prabhupāda also confirms the truth of a new beginning:

The mature devotees, who have completely executed Kṛṣṇa consciousness, are immediately transferred to the universe where Kṛṣṇa is appearing. In that universe the devotees get their **first opportunity** to associate with Kṛṣṇa personally and directly. KB, Chapter 28, 6th paragraph

In *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, Second Diffusion, Viśvanātha Cakravartī provides these illuminating details:

One may ask, "Why don't you say that when the *sādhaka* attains the stage of *prema* and leaves his body, he will take a *gopīka* body in the spiritual world without taking birth from the womb of a *gopīka*, after which he manifests *sneha* and so on (i.e., the higher stages of *prema*), in that body through the association of the eternally perfect *gopīs*?"

The answer here is: No, that will not happen, because then one cannot get a harmonious acquaintance according to the human-like pastimes there, like: 'Whose daughter is this *sakhī*? Whose wife is she? Whose daughter-in-law is she?'

'Alright then' one may say, 'then what is the harm in taking birth in the *aprakāṣa līlā*?' Then the answer is no, that also cannot be. *Sādhakas* or materially conditioned souls cannot enter into the transcendental manifestation named Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhama. Only perfected souls can enter it. Even through one's own *sādhana* the moods of *sneha* and so on are not easily attained.

Therefore, those devotees for whom *yogamāyā*, for the sake of perfecting their moods like *sneha* and so on, arranges that *prema* is manifest in them after they take birth in Kṛṣṇa's materially manifest pastimes (*bhauma-līlā*) in Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhama, and before they attain Kṛṣṇa's bodily association, they are taken to Kṛṣṇa's materially manifest pastimes in



Vṛndāvana. Because practicing devotees, karmis and perfected devotees can all be seen to enter into the materially manifest Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhama, it is experienced as both *sādhaka bhūmi* and *siddha bhūmi*.

Then if you say, “Where will those most eager *sādhakas* stay after they attain *prema* and until they attain a *gopīka* body, after leaving their material bodies?”

Then I answer: “After the *sādhaka* body perishes, that loving devotee, who has eagerly desired direct devotional service for a long time, will at once, by the Lord’s grace, receive the gift of the desired service and the audience of the Lord and His eternal associates, just as He once bestowed direct audience to Nārada Muni.”

He (Kṛṣṇa) will give the *sādhaka* a transcendental *gopīka* body. *Yogamāyā* will make that body take birth from a *gopīka* mother in the manifest pastimes when Kṛṣṇa descends to earth with His eternal associates. There will not be a second delay in that because the *prakāṣa-līlā* goes on without interruption. He will take birth in that material universe where Kṛṣṇa plays His manifest Vṛndāvana *līlā* at that time. Kṛṣṇa and His associates appear when the loving practicing devotee leaves his body. RVC, 2.7

This lucid explanation by Viśvanātha Cakravartī cannot possibly be construed in any way other than being a clear indication that there was no original relationship that is being resumed upon achieving *bhāva*. Where are the statements or stories that describe your mother, father and friends welcoming you back to Goloka, and asking where have you been and why did you leave? There are none anywhere in Vaiṣṇava literature. Zero.

Śrīla Prabhupāda made many statements about the *jīvas* ‘waking up’ from the material dream (illusion), but this also does not conflict with the previous *ācāryas*’ teachings, nor does it directly confirm a previously active *līlā*-based relationship with Kṛṣṇa. It simply describes the covering and deluding nature of *māyā*’s illusion, as well as a way to conceptualize spiritual enlightenment.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura clarifies the ‘dreaming’ concept in *Jaiva-dharma* by quoting *śāstra*:

There are two positions about which the *jīva-puruṣa* should inquire – the inanimate material world, and the spiritual world. The *jīva* is situated in a third position, which is a dreamlike condition, and is the juncture (*taṭasthā*) between the other two. Being situated at the place where the two worlds meet, he sees both the *jada-jagat* (inert world) and the *cid-jagat* (spiritual world). *Bṛhad-aranyaka Upaniṣad* (4.3.9)

Just as a large fish in a river sometimes goes to the eastern bank and sometimes to the western bank, so the *jīva*, being situated in *karana-jala* (the water of cause that lies between the inert and conscious worlds), also gradually wanders to both banks, the place of dreaming and the place of wakefulness. *Bṛhad-aranyaka Upaniṣad* (4.3.18) JD, Chapter 15, *Jīva Tattva*, Page 355

Based on the evidence presented in the above statements, there is no possible conclusion to be reached other than to understand that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements were his attempts to

explain complex philosophical truths (*jīva tattva*) to people who were raised in the deepest levels of ignorance and illusion, without any background in basic Vedic knowledge. Added to that, his primary audiences were generally very young, immature individuals with no seasoned wisdom, with deep dysfunctional conditioning from perverted dogmatic religious and degraded (by Vedic standards) social backgrounds.

Another aspect to consider is that there are literally trillions and trillions of *jīvas* in all of the uncountable universes manifested from *Mahā-viṣṇu*'s breathing. Are we to believe that so many *jīvas* fell from *Vaikuṅṭha* or *Goloka Vṛndāvana*, and continue to regularly fall?

And are we supposed to believe that all of the *nitya-siddhas* in the transcendental realm can potentially fall from that realm? Everyone is at risk? If not, where do you draw the line between those who are at risk of falling versus those who aren't? Isn't everyone in that realm eternally liberated (*nitya-siddha*)?

Where are those verses to confirm these concepts? There are none. What kind of transcendental eternal realms are *Vaikuṅṭha* or *Goloka Vṛndāvana* if so many *jīvas* can fall out of love with *Kṛṣṇa* and descend from such exalted abodes, from which no one is ever supposed to leave? Again, it makes absolutely no sense whatsoever, because it is not the truth.

The material sphere of *Kṛṣṇa*'s creation is said to be approximately one quarter (*ekapada vibhuti*) of His entire creation, of which the spiritual realms are the remaining three quarters (*tripada vibhuti*). So are we to understand that roughly 25% of all *jīvas* became disenchanted with being in the perfect spiritual realms with *Kṛṣṇa* and thought there might be something better than that?

Someone (supposedly trillions of *jīvas*) thought that being a *gopī* lover of *Kṛṣṇa* wasn't good enough, let's see what else is going on over there in the material world? How can that possibly happen? The *vraja-vāsīs* don't even know about the existence of the material realms, what to speak of coming in contact with them or contemplating them.

In *Prīti-sandarbha*, *Jīva Gosvāmī* explains how and when new souls enter the material universe:

“*Kalpa* after *kalpa* the number of individual souls in the material world remains the same. Do the individual souls never attain liberation? O knower of religion, I ask you what is the reason for this.

“One by one, *kalpa* after *kalpa*, the individual souls attain liberation. O *brāhmaṇa*, would not the material World become gradually empty in the course of time?” To this question, *Śrī Markandeya* gave this answer:

“When one individual soul attains liberation, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has inconceivable potencies, replaces him by creating another soul. In this way the Lord keeps the material world always filled.

“The souls who reside on *Brahmaloka* attain liberation along with the demigod *Brahmā*. When, in the next *mahā-kalpa*, the material worlds are created again, these souls are

replaced with other souls like them.” *Viṣṇu-dharma Purāṇa, Uttara-khanda*, quoted in PS, *Anuccheda* 16

What possible argument could defeat those facts? And how do you explain why it is that if we return to *Vaikuṅṭha* or *Goloka* this time, we are guaranteed never to fall down again? If we fell the first time, why wouldn't it be possible to fall again? What happened to that guarantee the first time? Does it only apply the second time around?

When one practices *vaidhī-bhakti*, one can attain *prema* and go to *Vaikuṅṭha*, where one can acquire four types of liberation: living on the same planet as *Viṣṇu (sālokyā)*, having the same bodily form as *Viṣṇu (sārūpyā)*, having the same opulence as *Viṣṇu (sārṣṭi)*, and having constant association with *Viṣṇu (sāmīpyā)*.

If a liberated *Vaiṣṇava* has the choice to “attain a bodily form like *Viṣṇu*” - *sārūpya-mukti* - then where is the question of returning home and waking up your original existing spiritual body? This is further proof that one's spiritual bodily form is “awarded” to the *jīva* by *Kṛṣṇa* or *Viṣṇu* according to one's desires to serve in a specific capacity.

From *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, Second Canto:

Śrī Gaṇeśa said: These are associates of the ruler of *Vaikuṅṭha*, the Supreme Lord Śrī *Kṛṣṇa*. They have attained bodily forms similar to His (*sārūpyā*) and have come here from *Vaikuṅṭha* itself. BB, 2.3.85

As I reverently offered obeisances, those associates of the Lord embraced me and reassured me again and again. Putting forward hundreds of arguments, they wished to give me a bodily form like theirs. BB, 2.4.13

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

The associates of *Nārāyaṇa* assured *Gopa-kumāra* that he need not be so surprised and should not treat them with such reverence. They were his friends, they told him, and were now bringing him to *Vaikuṅṭha*. They furthermore tried to convince him to accept a *Vaikuṅṭha* body like theirs, with four arms. His human body, they argued, was not suitable for living in *Vaikuṅṭha*; it would not be adequate for fully enjoying *Vaikuṅṭha* life.

They have assumed forms with colors and shapes similar to those of the Lord they have worshiped as most dear. BB, 2.4.141

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

This verse indicates that *Vaikuṅṭha* devotees who appear in nonhuman forms, such as those of some animal or plant, have worshiped similar forms of Lord *Nārāyaṇa*, who by His expansion appeared in those same species. These devotees, each in his own way, have realized the perfection of *sārūpyā*, having attained forms that look just like those of the Supreme Lord.

Jīva Gosvāmī explains the same thing in *Prīti-sandarbhā*:

“By service of the Absolute Truth, even for a few days, a devotee attains firm and fixed intelligence in Me. Consequently he goes to become My associate in the transcendental world after giving up the present deplorable material worlds.”

In *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* 1.6.28, the Supreme Personality of Godhead promises to give the devotee a spiritual form like His own. Here “*tam bhāgavatim*” means, “a form that is a fragment of the spiritual effulgence of the Supreme Lord”, “*śuddham*” means, “untouched by matter”, “*tanum*” means “a form given by the Supreme Personality of Godhead”, and “*mayi prayujyamaṇe*” means, “attained by me when the results of *karma* came to an end”.

This happened when the material body made of five elements fell away. Here it is seen that the subtle material body of mind, intelligence, and false ego is also destroyed. Because of his faith in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the devotee’s past *karma* also comes to an end. PS, *Anuccheda* 11

Once again, irrefutable statements that cannot be interpreted in any other way. And the same is true for *rāgānugā-bhaktas* who attain spiritual bodies of *gopas* and *gopīs*. Those bodies are “awarded” to *sādhana-siddha jīvas* exactly according to their desires for a specific relationship with Kṛṣṇa in their chosen mood of love. Here is a vivid example of this from *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, where Sarūpa (Gopa-kumāra) and his disciple Śrī Janasarma (the Mathurā *brāhmaṇa*) meet Kṛṣṇa in Goloka:

Lord Kṛṣṇa, that crest jewel of munificent persons, was distressed because He could not find anything better than Himself to offer as a gift. So He removed the ornaments from His own body and decorated the *brāhmaṇa* with them, making him look like Sarūpa. BB, 2.7.42

Sanātana Gosvāmī’s commentary:

“This learned *brāhmaṇa* has offered Me his very self,” Kṛṣṇa thought, “but in return I must give him something more valuable than My self; otherwise I won’t be showing any more generosity than I normally do. But I can’t find anything more precious than My self. What can I give him?” Thinking like this made Kṛṣṇa anxious.

He then decided to give Janaśarmā something He had never before given to anyone – His own ornaments. But Kṛṣṇa had to consider seriously before He made that decision, because to give such a gift would verify that He considers His devotees more important than Himself. Along with His ornaments, Kṛṣṇa also gave Janaśarmā a cowherd’s form similar to Sarūpa’s.

In this way Kṛṣṇa bestowed on Janaśarmā a supreme mercy that only He could give. And Janaśarmā felt completely fulfilled. BB, 2.7.43

From Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

By converting the dry brāhmaṇa Janaśarmā into a young cowherd fit to join the assembly of intimate cowherd friends, Kṛṣṇa proved that in giving mercy He is unsurpassed. And Janaśarmā, having attained a form like his own *guru*'s, was fully satisfied.

These statements are conclusive beyond any arguments. Many additional references from all of the *ācāryas* will be given in later chapters to further validate this absolute fact. Here is one more vivid example from Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*. He begins by posing a question:

“If those present day persons practicing *rāgānugā* attain *prema* in some birth by going through the states of *niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, and *āsakti*, they become qualified for service to the Lord. At the time of leaving the body, will they attain the positions of associates beyond the material world, or participate when the Lord descends as an *avatāra*?”

Because it is impossible for the transformations of *prema* such as *sneha*, *māna*, *pranaya* to appear in the body of a *sādhaka*, by the power of associating in *gopī* bodies with *nitya-siddha gopīs* having *mahābhāva*, and by seeing, hearing, remembering and chanting about the qualities of the Lord, they will certainly attain such a position. Because these methods are very powerful, without them one cannot attain perfection as a *gopī*.

He (Kṛṣṇa) gives a spiritual *gopī* body endowed with proper *bhāvas*, as he gave a spiritual body to Nārada. Then, when Kṛṣṇa and his associates appear in a manifest Vṛndāvana, that body is born in the womb of a *gopī* by the arrangement of *yogamāyā* in order to perfect *sneha* and other varieties of *prema*. UN, 3.49-51 Commentary

Kṛṣṇa “gives a spiritual *gopī* body,” ... “as He gave a spiritual body to Nārada.” Why does Kṛṣṇa have to give a spiritual body if we already had one that was simply asleep? Kṛṣṇa “gave” Nārada a spiritual body – it doesn't say that Kṛṣṇa woke him up or showed him his original form that was dormant. Where are the verses which say that Kṛṣṇa wakes up the devotee so they can see their original spiritual form? There are none.

And finally, Sanātana Gosvāmī comments in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

A non devotee may ask, “Because devotional service is a type of activity and all activities are driven by ego, how can devotional service develop after ego has been left aside?” This question comes from a misunderstanding of the Supreme Lord's personal energies. Just as one of His special energies provides liberated Vaiṣṇavas with spiritual bodies, another gives them a transcendental ego, with the attitude that “I am His servant.” With this spiritual ego, pure devotional service is easily obtained. BB, 2.2.208 commentary

How can anyone possibly interpret these statements to support the argument that we fell from Vraja or Vaikuṅṭha, and through *bhakti*, we're simply waking up to resume our forgotten *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa in our original spiritual bodies, which already exist? It cannot be done.

We cannot resolve this issue by limiting our study to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements only, while ignoring the statements of the *ācāryas* as presented above. Any authoritative analysis must include the entire body of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature. Therefore, those who assert the fall theory must explain all of the statements presented herein to prove that they confirm their theory.

According to the *paramparā* protocol, we are obligated to defer to the collective, unified consensus presented by all of the previous *ācāryas*, and resolve Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements according to their conclusions. Twisting Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements to force them to prove that the *jīvas* fell from Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā*, against an overwhelming abundance of contrary evidence is a futile exercise, as examining any of the weak contrary arguments will easily reveal.

What is the purpose of trying to prove that Śrīla Prabhupāda said something so contradictory to the previous *ācāryas*? Their numerous statements are clear and indisputable, and there is not one single statement that supports the “fall from the *līlā*” side of this debate. To maintain and promote that Śrīla Prabhupāda established this false concept is not loyalty to Śrīla Prabhupāda, it is *guru-aparādha* because it is a serious distortion of his statements and Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*. It reveals a complete lack of understanding of this crucial philosophical subject. It should be rejected by all of his disciples and followers.

## Chapter 2 – Goloka Vṛndāvana – the supreme destination

### The *līlā* books – easy entrance into eternity

In material existence, we never know what or where our next birth will be, or what mixture of happiness and suffering we can expect. It's next to impossible to predict because there are a lifetime's worth (and more) of *karmic* factors in play. Add to that the fact that most people don't even understand how the laws of *karma* work, and thus, they act in complete ignorance of the universal forces that stringently bind them.

As previously discussed, the primary factors that shape and direct the process of creating our next identity and body are the mind, consciousness and collective desires. The quantitative factors are the accumulated *karmic* results from our past and current lives, which will determine the extent to which one will be able to fulfill one's desires, along with the suffering that is due. Practically speaking, no one is capable of consciously pre-selecting their next bodily form and gender, what to speak of choosing family and friends, or the range of activities, or location, and so on. This has been the case since time immemorial.

On the other hand, qualified practitioners engaged in *rāgānugā-bhakti* are focused on a well defined set of goals as a core part of their practice, so they know exactly where their next birth will be, what type of body, gender and identity they will have, what they will be doing, and with whom. Instead of acting blindly in ignorance, there is enlightened action with a clear vision. Such devotees have full confidence that Kṛṣṇa will bestow His mercy on them. That is an ornament of their *bhakti*.

Through their intense spiritual desires, devotees engaged in *rāgānugā-bhakti* conceive of every single aspect of their form and individual personal identity, including the specific details of the relationship they desire with Kṛṣṇa, and Rādhā as well, in the case of *mādhurya-rasa*. All of these sincere spiritual desires will be fulfilled by Kṛṣṇa out of love and mercy for His devotees when they attain *bhāva*. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura writes about this in *Prema-bhakti-candrikā*:

I will always think of the devotional service of the lotus feet of the Divine Pair, and I will always remain attached to that. Whatever I think of during my spiritual practice (*sādhana*) I will attain in my *siddha-deha* when I reach perfection. This is the means of *rāga-bhakti*. PBC, 55

The treasure I desire as a practitioner I will get when I attain my spiritual body (*siddha-deha*); it is just a question of being ripe or unripe. The ripe stage is the stage of pure devotion (*prema-bhakti*), and the unripe stage is the stage of practice (*sādhana-bhakti*). That is the essential truth about devotional principles. PBC, 56

Vaiṣṇavas learn about this eternal and confidential realm of existence, our future home, from Vedic literatures like *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, the *Purānas*, and other books that contain narrations of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, such as the *ācāryas'* *līlā* books like *Govinda-līlāmṛta*, *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta*, *Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū*, *Gopāla-campū*, *Gītā-govinda*. Without regularly hearing about Kṛṣṇa's

pastimes, how will one become attracted to participate in them? Instead of reading the Drudge Report, read the Vraja Report!

These books provide direct access to this eternal realm, and according to one's level of realization, one will be allowed to enter deeper and deeper into the spiritual nature of this reality. Through these books we are introduced to the primary associates in Kṛṣṇa's Vraja *līlā*, one of whom will eventually become our chosen mentor and whose example we will follow to perfect our *prema-bhakti*. This is precisely why Vaiṣṇavas are constantly urged to immerse themselves in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains this in *Jaiva-dharma*:

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: ...It is said in *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*:

Just as anointing the eyes with salve gives them the power to see even subtle objects, similarly, when the *jīva*'s heart is cleansed by the *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* of My supremely purifying *līlā-kathā*, he gains the ability to realize extremely subtle *tattva*, namely, the truth about My *svarūpa* (nature) and My *līlās*. SB, 11.14.26

When the eyes are treated with ointment, they can see much more clearly. In just the same way, a *jīva* can realize the transcendental nature of the manifest *kṛṣṇa-līlā* to the extent that he is purified by contact with the transcendental reality through *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana* and *smaraṇa* of *kṛṣṇa-līlā-kathā*. JD, Chapter 40, Pages 862-863

Rūpa Gosvāmī has thoughtfully provided us with yet another very useful text wherein we can acquaint ourselves with our new family, friends and associates, in anticipation of going there. Śrī Rūpa's, *Rādhā-kṛṣṇa-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā*, gives a summary description of all the well known residents of Vraja, representing all four of the main *rasas* – *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya*. Everyone's interrelationships are also described. It's a literal "who's who" of Goloka Vṛndāvana.

For example, we can read about each of the eight primary girlfriends (*aṣṭa-sakhīs*) of Rādhā, and learn who their mother, father, brothers and husbands are. We also get a short description of their personal characteristics, like their age, bodily complexion, favored attire, special or primary service in the *līlā*, and the *sakhīs* in their group (*gaṇa*). In the case of these main *gopīs*, we also learn about their primary loving moods and relational attitudes.

*Rāgānugā-bhakti* manifests uniquely in each devotee because of individual differences in tastes and preferences regarding Kṛṣṇa, who relishes unlimited variety. Thus, *rāgānugā-sādhakas* will tend to focus on specific *līlās* that are most attractive to them in terms of their desired relationships and service. For example, a devotee who has an intense desire to enter *mādhurya-rasa* as a *sakhī* of Rādhā, will not be as attracted to Kṛṣṇa's Mathurā or Dvārakā pastimes as they would be to the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* – Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes throughout the eight daily periods in Vraja.

Because the goal of *rāgānugā-bhakti* is to enter Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, the more one is immersed in the pastimes with intense desire, the more one makes progress towards that goal. If we want to be with Kṛṣṇa in the future, then we have to take the time to be with Kṛṣṇa in the present – literally, in the moment. Because, truly, there is no past or future in the eternal realm, only the



eternal ever-fresh present. This is accomplished by steady *sādhana* and *bhajana*, focused on hearing, chanting or discussing and remembering, processes that continue even after reaching the goal.

In his commentary to *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī writes:

The independent activities of the Lord however, are for the benefit of the devotee. To show mercy to the devotees the Lord performs such pastimes. A person who has taken a human body, on hearing these pastimes, becomes completely dedicated to the Lord. The pastimes have a power like that of jewels, *mantras* or herbs so that they produce complete dedication to the Lord. They do not create sinful effects.

...Thus, just from hearing constantly and becoming addicted to any topics of Kṛṣṇa, one attains perfection, and if one hears topics of the *rāsa-līlā* one attains even higher perfection. One should always hear and become addicted to the five chapters on *rāsa-līlā*. UN, 3.27, commentary

There are, however, differences in how devotees engage in such hearing, as well as the results that ensue. It's not just a matter of reading the pastimes casually and infrequently and simply being familiar with them. These are not ordinary stories in books. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains this in *Jaiva-dharma*:

Vijaya: What is irregular hearing (*krama-hīna-śravaṇa-daśā*)?

Gosvāmī: *Krama-hīna-śravaṇa-daśā* is hearing about *kṛṣṇa-līlā* in an irregular and unmethodical manner. Hearing *kṛṣṇa-līlā* with irresolute intelligence results in this sort of unmethodical *śravaṇa*, because such hearing does not enable one to realize the relationship between the various *līlās*, and thus, *rasa* does not awaken in his heart.

Vijaya: Please explain about systematic hearing (*krama-śuddha-śravaṇa-daśā*).

Gosvāmī: *Rasa* only awakens in one's heart when *kṛṣṇa-līlā* is heard methodically or in a regular order with resolute intelligence. When one hears the *aṣṭa-kālīya-nitya-līlā* (eternal eightfold daily pastimes) separately from the *naimittika-līlās* (occasional *līlās* such as Kṛṣṇa's divine birth and so on), then his *śravaṇa* is *krama-śuddha*. Only this *krama-śuddha śravaṇa* is desirable on the path of *bhajana*.

If one hears *kṛṣṇa-līlā* in the *krama-śuddha* manner, the sweetness and charm of the *līlā* is gradually conceived, and the inclination to perform *rāgānugā-bhajana* appears in the heart of the listener. At that time he thinks within himself, "Aho! Subala has such a wonderful *sakhya-bhāva* for Kṛṣṇa. I will also render loving *sevā* to Kṛṣṇa like him in *sakhya-rasa*."

This type of strong affinity is called *lobha* (greed). The performance of *kṛṣṇa-bhajana* with such *lobha*, following the sweet *bhāvas* of the *vraja-vāsīs*, is called *rāgānugā-bhakti*. I have given the example of *sakhya-rasa*, but this type of *rāgānugā-bhakti* is also performed in all the four *rasas*, beginning with *dāsyā*. JD, Chapter 40, Pages 854-855

I will discuss the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* in more detail in Chapter 5, because it is a major part of the manifestation of one's identity that takes place through *rāgānugā-bhajana*. For those who aspire to enter *mādhurya-rasa*, the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* are the particular pastimes of focus, and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Govinda-līlāmṛta* is a classic *līlā* text to be read by all such aspirants:

All glories to Śrī *Govinda-līlāmṛta*, the immortal nectar pastimes of Śrī Govinda, that defeats the nectar of the demigods, or the desire for liberation, constantly bestows a wonderful thirst to the ears, words and mind whenever it is drunk, that cures the disease of material life, yet produces delusions and blindness of loving intoxication, and gives inexhaustible relish, even if it is consumed again and again, nourishing even the body. GL, 1.5

Many of the *ācāryas'* books of prayers of intense longing are expressions of their desires for specific services throughout the eight periods of the day and the pastimes associated with each period. This is the esoteric part of the process of *rāgānugā-bhajana* revealed in those particular books, which will also be examined later.

The more we read and discuss these pastimes, the more we enter into that reality. Thus, these *līlā* books are an invaluable and absolute necessity for all determined practitioners. They are the primary means of accessing the eternal *līlā*, especially in the early stages of progress, and they directly nourish remembrance (*smaraṇam*) of Kṛṣṇa. In *Prema-bhakti-candrikā*, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura explains this succinctly and emphatically and Viśvanātha Cakravartī fully concurs:

Remembrance of the Lord's pastimes is the life and soul of the devotee. Remembering the sweet loving pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is the essence of all the processes. This is the goal of life, as well as the best means of achieving the goal. PBC, 61

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

This is the essence of all instructions regarding rules and regulations. The remembrance of the pastimes of the Lord is the only process for achieving the goal of one's life, relishing the transcendental [*rasas*] of the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. There is no higher goal or process than this. The remembrance of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is the essence of all instructions given in the scriptures.

## **Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana – God's personal inner sanctum**

Material existence on this earth is driven in part by the forces of time and *karma*, specifically, the interaction of the *karma* of billions of humans. Everyone is engrossed in trying to fulfill their endless desires for pleasure, power, love and happiness. It is a maze so vast, inconceivably complex and interwoven, it can hardly be conceived in the mind. It is beyond anyone's control, individual or group, no matter the extent of their so-called power.

Although there are unseen material laws in force, regulating and controlling everything, on the surface it is essentially an insane nightmarish free-for-all. There is danger at every step, and even with the help of insights gained from Vedic astrological analysis, no one knows precisely how

their *karma* will unfold. Now multiply that perspective by unlimited planets in unlimited universes. All of this is managed effortlessly by Kṛṣṇa's external energy – *māyā-śakti*.

On the other hand, the affairs of Goloka Vṛndāvana are managed by one of Kṛṣṇa's internal energies, dedicated specifically for that purpose – *līlā-śakti* – also known as *yogamāyā*, who is personified as Paurṇamāsī in *vraja-līlā*, an elderly renunciate woman, the mother of Sāṅdīpani Muni. The *līlā-śakti* responds in real time to Kṛṣṇa's ever changing desires for pleasure and enjoyment in endless ecstatic moods of love. *Yogamāyā* is responding directly to the mind, heart and desires of Kṛṣṇa as it all unfolds in real time – truly the ultimate forefront of the highest reality.

Kṛṣṇa in Vraja is God in His original form, beyond which there is no other form or source. That supreme personal form is the source of all existence, both spiritual and material. He has unlimited expansions to take care of all other affairs outside of Vraja, and even those expansions do not manifest from Him directly. It is Balarāma who is the direct source of the plenary expansions who deal with all other aspects of His creation. In His supremely all attractive form, Kṛṣṇa is completely focused on His never ending pastimes in loving relationships with His most intimate associates. Kṛṣṇa is immersed exclusively in the highest levels of love while experiencing the most astonishing pleasures, and nothing else.

Kṛṣṇa chooses to do anything He wants according to His mood and *yogamāyā* (Paurṇamāsī) makes all of the necessary arrangements. Everything is manifest instantly and perfectly according to Kṛṣṇa's spontaneously unfolding desires. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* desire to enjoy a variety of forests in Vṛndāvana, each one manifesting a different season – all simultaneously. *Yogamāyā*'s potency causes everything to manifest seamlessly as Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* walk about enjoying.

In the *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, we learn that the relationships in Goloka are an astonishing mix of sweetness, opulence and worldly characteristics.

Although that reciprocal affection seems to follow the ways of the ordinary world, it is beyond the world. It combines intimate sweetness, amazing opulence, and worldly simplicity. BB, 2.5.84

From Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

Goloka's Lord and its residents care for one another as do people of the material world, yet their *prema* transcends the limits of mundane love. The loving dealings of Vraja are like nothing ever seen in this world. ... Kṛṣṇa's friends are constantly desirous of seeing Him, so much so that they cannot tolerate even the momentary obstruction caused by Kṛṣṇa's passing behind a tree. And the blessed cowherd girls have no interest in life other than Him; whether separated from Him, or going out to meet Him, or enjoying His company, they relish all sorts of extraordinary ecstasy.

In these ways the *prema* of Vraja is both amazing and sweet, combining within itself the majestic opulence of the spiritual world and the simple sweetness of the material world. The

devotees of Vraja possess super-worldly opulence, and at the same time they are the most simple people.

By their opulent power they are expertly able to understand and take part in all the various aspects of the Lord's countless pastimes. And like ordinary people, the *vraja-vāsīs*, it is well known from the accounts of their lives, enjoy food and drink, the company of friends and relatives, and so on.

The other integral component along with Kṛṣṇa's desires are the collective desires of the devotees in Vraja. Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously fulfilling His own personal desires along with fulfilling the endless desires of His unlimited devotees who are all deeply in love with Him. This astonishing and inconceivable combination of endlessly circular desires is the causative force that gives variety to the pastimes. Of course it is understood that these desires are all saturated with pure love – *prema*.

From *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

Kṛṣṇa, served by all those *gopīs*, their hearts melting in great affection for Him, responded by giving to each one, unseen by the others, the prized remnants of His chewed pān. BB, 2.6.143

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

Kṛṣṇa is more eager to fulfill the desires of His devotees than to receive their service. On this occasion He gave the *prasāda* of His *pān* to all the *gopīs*. This does not mean, however, that Kṛṣṇa treated all the *gopīs* exactly the same way; He reciprocated with each of them individually, unseen by the others.

Although the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* defines eight periods throughout the day, along with the various pastimes that typically take place within each period, Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are understood to be unlimited in scope and variety. We should therefore understand that the *līlā* texts are representative examples of Kṛṣṇa's unlimited *līlā*. They are an introductory starting point for entry into to this realm, presented specifically for our benefit.

Goloka Vṛndāvana is the preeminent manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's innermost desires to enjoy and to love in unlimited relationships, without social formalities, restrictions or inhibitions. He is the carefree youthful lover (*dhīra-lalita*) in Goloka to the fullest extent. It is His inner sanctum, His heart, and the most complete manifestation of His deepest loving propensities and most profound desires for pleasure and enjoyment.

Nārada Muni explains this to Gopa-kumāra in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, and Sanātana Gosvāmī expands:

Indeed that world, I think, displays the complete essence of Lord Hari's most confidential Godhood. BB, 2.5.88

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

Goloka is even more splendidly opulent than Vaikuṅṭha. Someone may doubt, then, how Goloka could appear like an ordinary place of the finite world. Despite this doubt, Śrī Goloka is factually the one spiritual realm where the Supreme Lord shows the essential perfection of His beauty, personality, and sporting pastimes.

This highest perfection is also the most confidential mystery, which only few fortunate souls are privileged to understand. Goloka holds the supreme position among all the Lord's abodes, for there the Lord constantly displays perfections never seen anywhere else. Goloka is greater than all other spiritual abodes, and Kṛṣṇa in Goloka is greater than all other forms of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa in Goloka is especially known as Hari, the Lord who steals the heart of everyone with His beauty, personality, and pastimes.

It is often said that everyone in Vraja serves Kṛṣṇa. The idea of "service" is a broad concept that does not always imply service as in the context of a servant in a household doing menial tasks in a mood of servitude. When the *gopīs* "serve" Kṛṣṇa it doesn't mean that they are all being menial servants. Their unique loving moods and personalities make an interactive contribution to the *līlā*, which is "serving" the greater purpose of the *līlā* – endless varieties of loving exchanges on every possible level – *prema-bhakti-rasa*.

Some *gopīs* "serve" Kṛṣṇa by arguing with Him, insulting and rebuking Him. Rādhā often exhibits jealous anger (*māna*) and spurns Kṛṣṇa. All of that enhances *rasa*, which Kṛṣṇa enjoys immensely. Kṛṣṇa is absorbed in directly loving the *gopīs* reciprocally, not just enjoying them. He is compelled by their love (*prema*), not by their particular service. Kṛṣṇa loves being treated as an equal.

Each associate there has a unique relationship and loving mood with Kṛṣṇa which brings Him immeasurable pleasure. He perfectly reciprocates with each devotee according to their specific loving mood, and He fulfills all of their desires beyond their wildest dreams. He has room for unlimited participants in this eternal *līlā*. He is truly the reservoir of all love. Who in their right mind would not want to find out how to become qualified to enter into this arrangement for eternity?

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has taken a solemn oath that for all eternity He will reciprocate accordingly with the manner in which one serves Him. CC, 2.8.90

According to the amount of *prema* and its transformations that the woman shows, as *uttama*, *madhyama* or *kaniṣṭhā*, Kṛṣṇa responds with similar love. UN, 5.97

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

According to the amount of *bhāva* of a particular woman, Kṛṣṇa responds with the same amount of *bhāva*. The word "amount" includes the different varieties of love because the Lord has said, *ye yathā mām prapadyante tāms tathaiva bhajāmy aham*: according to the way in which a person surrenders, I respond. BG, 4.11

Kṛṣṇa manifests a type of love for a particular woman similar to the love manifested by that woman for Him. UN, 14.62

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

“Do the women possessing *samarthā-rati* for Kṛṣṇa have the same type of *prema* and higher levels of love or do they have different varieties? And does Kṛṣṇa have the same type of love for all of them, or different types [of love]?” This verse answers.

Nārada also explains this to Gopa-kumāra in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

According to the way one worships, the Lord awards different results. One who thus reaches the goal he has pursued never feels discontent. BB, 2.4.189

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

The Personality of Godhead knows everything there is to know. He is also the most merciful giver of charity. Why then doesn't He give the same supreme happiness to all His devotees? It is because what He gives them depends on their expressed desires.

Then aren't the devotees dissatisfied who receive happiness that is relatively less? No. When the Supreme Lord reciprocates the love of any of His pure devotees, the devotee is never left feeling incomplete, because everything the devotee wanted the Lord provides.

Again from *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

The Lord expands abundant variety to enrich His devotees forever with enjoyment in these exuberant waves of sweet ecstasy. And just as, even though He is devoid of every kind of material quality, there is firm and constant variety in Him, so in His devotees there is a strong and varied and wonderful experience in all the functions of the senses. BB, 2.2.220

From Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

Why does the Supreme Lord expand the diverseness of His personality? He does so for the pleasure of His devotees. The Lord's attractive qualities expand infinitely, giving the devotees, who are equally spiritual beings, many different kinds of opportunities to serve Him by activities like hearing and chanting.

This spiritual variety in devotional service expands perpetually, with no beginning or end. It manifests itself in the Lord and also in His devotees, enhancing their beauty, effulgence, and enjoyment and enlivening and empowering their senses.

In *mādhurya-rasa* the most intense manifestations of *prema* are infused with overwhelming feelings of attachment and possessiveness towards Kṛṣṇa – “Kṛṣṇa is all mine and I am His completely.” When the devotee's love becomes that deep and powerful, it totally overwhelms Kṛṣṇa, who irresistibly reciprocates exactly as that devotee desires, and even more. Kṛṣṇa is the perfect lover and friend of everyone, and He alone can maintain such intimate and personally attentive relationships with unlimited devotees.

It is said that the *gopīs* manifest the highest levels of *prema* among all of the Vraja associates. They only desire to give pleasure to Kṛṣṇa and they are not motivated by desires for their own personal enjoyment. Of course, this doesn't mean that they don't enjoy pleasure, as we saw in the statement above from *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*.

They are experiencing an unlimited variety of the most intense blissful ecstasies of love for Kṛṣṇa at every moment, being inundated by the variegated waves of that *prema*, while living in the most incredibly opulent realm in existence. They are not lacking any pleasure at all. Quite the contrary. Even the intense pain of separation brings them ecstatic pleasure because of the depth of love that manifests therein.

And because Kṛṣṇa perfectly reciprocates their love in every way, He experiences heights of love unavailable from any other relationships in Vraja. Only the *gopīs'* love can bring out this kind of love in Kṛṣṇa and that is one of the reasons He is so irresistibly and continuously attracted to them. Without the *gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa would not be able to experience this kind of love. And Rādhā's love is the most astonishing and most intense, beyond all the other *gopīs*.

From *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*:

That *rati*, attaining a special nature, in which the desire for enjoyment becomes one with it, is called *samarthā-rati*. UN, 14.52

Śrī Jīva's commentary:

That *rati* in which enjoyment reaches oneness with it is called *samarthā-rati*. It reaches a special position. The meaning is this. There are two types of enjoyment: attaining happiness of the senses through the beloved, and giving happiness to the senses of the beloved by oneself. The first type is *kāma*, with a desire for one's own enjoyment.

The second type is called *rati*, with a desire to benefit the beloved. In the second type of enjoyment, there is happiness by the touch of the beloved. Though that desire is difficult to suppress because of its strength, by mixing it with *rati*, which has attained a special status, it becomes one with it. That *rati* is called *samarthā-rati*, because it is capable of overcoming all else.

Śrī Viśvanātha's commentary:

That by which the desire for enjoyment attains oneness with *rati* is called *samarthā-rati*. That *rati* attains a special status, inconceivably superior to *sādhāraṇī-rati* (the queens of Dvārakā) and *samañjasā-rati* (Kubja), because by its very nature it controls Kṛṣṇa completely.

Because Kṛṣṇa reciprocates the *gopīs'* love exactly as they love Him, He therefore acts only for their pleasure in perfect reciprocity with their mood as stated above. Thus, it is said that Kṛṣṇa fulfills all their desires. The more they love Kṛṣṇa selflessly and completely, the more He loves them in the same way. This is one of the many astonishing features of God's loving propensity.

Everyone there wants to serve and love Him and He serves and loves each individual exactly as they desire to be loved by Him.

Who can imagine the full potential of God's loving emotions and ecstasies? It is absolutely inconceivable. Only the *gopīs* are capable of bringing out the most extraordinary loving emotions that exist within Kṛṣṇa. That is part of the supreme nature of the *gopīs'* *prema*. No one else's love affects Him in that way. It is understood by all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas that Rādhā's love for Kṛṣṇa is supreme and incomparable, far beyond all the other *gopīs*, so the effects of Her love are paramount in every way.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī states in a commentary in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*:

The *samarthā-rati* of the women of Gokula is very strong. *Sādhāraṇī-rati* and *samañjasā-rati* are not so strong. This should be understood from the power to control Kṛṣṇa seen in *samarthā-rati*. *Samarthā* means, "fit for" (competent). Because the object has not been explicitly stated, it should be supplied. This is described as follows.

This *rati* is fit for controlling Kṛṣṇa, their lover, completely. It bewilders Him with the taste of sweetness of their forms and qualities, though He can experience His own sweetness. It completely astonishes Him and makes Him forget His own great powers. It produces an ever-fresh excellence in tasting ordinary sweetness in form, qualities and talents. UN, 14.44

In Goloka Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa is at His most vulnerable. He is not controlling everything there as God. No such thought ever enters His mind there. He is in full *dhīra-lalita nāyaka* mode – the carefree, blissful lover – just being the extraordinary individual person that He is, and following His own spontaneous desires to enjoy with His associates there, especially and primarily with Rādhā, along with Her *sakhīs* and the other *gopīs*. *Yogamāyā* (Purnamāsī) personally arranges all of the details of the pastimes, while Kṛṣṇa is simply in full experiencing mode, not controlling anything. This is what God does when He's not being God.

In that innermost realm, He is under the complete control and influence of the love of His devotees, and eternally bound by that love to reciprocate with them accordingly. Because all of the inhabitants of Vraja possess the most intense pure love for Kṛṣṇa, which is constantly flowing and ever expanding, it is beyond any other realm in existence. The intensity of the love that continuously pervades that realm is beyond anyone's comprehension. It even bewilders Kṛṣṇa.

Sometimes Kṛṣṇa's friends see Him laying on the ground trembling and convulsing from ecstatic loving emotions for Rādhā. Can you imagine that sight? There before you on the ground lies God, unconscious and shaking uncontrollably. Of course, you wouldn't be thinking He is God, but you get the point. Only the *vraja-vāsīs* see Him in these vulnerable circumstances. Vraja is the only realm where God is comfortable exhibiting these kinds of astonishing intimate ecstatic symptoms without inhibition or restriction.

Far from being "in control" in Vraja, Kṛṣṇa is the one who is being controlled – by the *prema* of His devotees. That Kṛṣṇa is controlled by *prema* is further corroborated in Viśvanātha



Cakravartī's commentary from *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* when Brahmā stole the cows and cowherd boys:

It may be objected that Kṛṣṇa in the form of the cowherd boys should have had the same affection for their mothers as the actual boys, because the verse says the Kṛṣṇa took up exactly the character, dress, form and age as each cowherd boy. But though Kṛṣṇa is supreme, and everyone from Brahmā to even His personal expansions are dependent on Him, He is dependent on *prema*. *Prema* is not dependent on Him. He cannot control or restrict *prema*.

Śrīdhara Svāmi says, "This irregularity is difficult to prevent in Kṛṣṇa." Such uncontrollable *prema* was in the hearts of the mothers towards Kṛṣṇa in the form of their sons. Thus, Kṛṣṇa in the form of their sons forgot His powers as God, as He took up the role of their sons, and remained dependent on them, like a commander next to the king. One should not say that such dependence is a fault – rather it is Kṛṣṇa's ornament. As dependence of the *jīva* on *māyā* is the cause of his sorrow, so Kṛṣṇa's dependence on *prema* is the cause of ever-increasing bliss. This is the realization of the great devotees. SB, 10.13.25

In the realm of Goloka Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa is at the very center of this vortex of intense love, being the object of every one of the unlimited devotees' desires and loving emotions – simultaneously and eternally. And He perfectly and continuously reciprocates each devotee's desired loving sentiments. It is indeed the supreme and ultimate manifestation of the universal concept that, "God is love". Unfortunately, very few people ever truly understand the full implications of that well worn phrase.

From *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

Every one of the millions and millions of cowherds – the children, young people, and elders – thinks, "I alone am most dear to Kṛṣṇa." BB, 2.6.211

Just as the pure way they behave toward Kṛṣṇa always confirms this ecstatic mentality, so does the way He behaves toward every one of them. BB, 2.6.212

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

This Goloka ecstasy is not just an idle meditation. It manifests itself actively in the way the devotees deal with Kṛṣṇa. The cowherds express their intimate love for Him in everything they do, including their eating and ordinary household chores. And Kṛṣṇa also shows by His behavior that He considers Himself their property.

There is never even a trace of duplicity in the loving exchanges between Kṛṣṇa and His devotees in Goloka; their dealings are *viśuddha*, absolutely pure. It is not that Kṛṣṇa truly loves only one of His devotees and with everyone else only pretends.

There are variegated layers within each of the four main *rasas* – servants, friends, elders, lovers – and varying degrees of intensity and flavors of *prema-rasa* within all those. All adding to the limitless variety that Kṛṣṇa desires to continuously enjoy with His eternal associates.

Amazingly, even though there are countless other devotees in a relationship with Kṛṣṇa, a devotee always has the experience that it's an intimate group of friends and not a constant vast ocean of people milling about trying to get close to Kṛṣṇa. This is due to the potencies of *yogamāyā*, who orchestrates that transcendental illusion. Of course, when the *rāsa* dance takes place there is a vast assembly of countless groups of *gopīs*, but that's a special event, and even then, the *gopīs* are not aware of how many participants are actually there. This mystical potency will be explored in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

## Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's love affair – the center of it all

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's eternal love affair is universally famous and the subject of many books. For the purposes of this book, the discussion will focus on certain aspects of this supreme relationship as it relates to *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

Kṛṣṇa is the supreme absolute truth, one without a second, and the cause of all causes. He is literally everything. There is nothing in existence that doesn't emanate from Him originally. We have learned from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that Rādhā is the personification of Kṛṣṇa's *hlādinī-śakti* – His internal pleasure potency. On the one hand, She is non-different from Kṛṣṇa, and on the other hand, She is eternally separate from Him as His primary consort.

As stated in the previous section, in Goloka Vṛndāvana, Vraja, Kṛṣṇa exhibits the full extent of His loving propensities in His dealings with the Vraja associates. Of all the Vraja residents, the *gopīs* manifest the highest level of *prema* for Kṛṣṇa, and among all the *gopīs*, Rādhā is the most dear to Kṛṣṇa. Her love is beyond all others by a vast margin. Given our esoteric understanding of Her supreme and unique position, it is not surprising that this is the case.

In truth, Kṛṣṇa's love for Rādhā, and Her love for Kṛṣṇa, are the focal point, not only of Vraja, but of all existence. Everything revolves around Their love affair and its associated pastimes. When Kṛṣṇa is associating with the cowherd boys, herding the cows and playing together, although He is very attentive in His interactions with them, He is always simultaneously thinking of the *gopīs* and specifically, Rādhā. When Kṛṣṇa is with His parents and other elders of Vraja, the same thing is true - Kṛṣṇa is always thinking of Rādhā and the other *gopīs*.

In *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Rūpa Gosvāmī explains:

That love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is never at any time or in any circumstance covered by other similar relationships or by different *sthāyī-bhāvas*. BRS, 3.5.21

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

The love or *rati* in this verse refers exclusively to the love of Rādhā and Madhava, and not Kṛṣṇa's relationships with other dear *gopīs* in the conjugal mood. The *rati* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, composed of seeing each other and the other pastimes using trickery, is never covered over by similar relationships – Kṛṣṇa's relationships with other *gopīs*, or by contrary relationships such as *vātsala-sthāyī-bhāva*, which desire to compete with this type of *rati*.

There are even rival groups of *gopīs* in Vraja, but we learn from *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* that these unexpected and unique conditions exist only to enhance the *rasa* of *mādhurya līlā*. It never creates unfavorable moods or circumstances. On the contrary, it increases everyone's love and attachment for Kṛṣṇa and vice versa.

Because of Rādhā's unique position as the personification of *hlādinī-śakti*, and the fact that all of Her *nitya-siddha sakhīs* are Her personal bodily expansions (*kāya-vyūha*), Her relationship with Kṛṣṇa is primary and predominant, but still completely integrated within the context of Kṛṣṇa's relationships with all of the other Vraja associates, as indicated in the previous section.

Rādhā's *sakhīs* are fully aware of the special connection between Her and Kṛṣṇa, and they are all integral participants in making that relationship as wonderful as it is. In fact, without them, that relationship wouldn't expand properly. Rāmānanda Rāya explained this to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

The pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are very confidential. They cannot be understood through the [*rasas*] of servitude, fraternity or paternal affection. Actually, only the *gopīs* have the right to appreciate these transcendental pastimes, and only from them can these pastimes be expanded. Without the *gopīs*, these pastimes between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa cannot be nourished. Only by their cooperation are such pastimes broadcast. It is their business to taste the [*rasas*]. CC, 2.8.201-203

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared a short 500 years ago specifically to reveal the confidential ocean of *mādhurya-rasa*, something no other *avatāra* ever did. In fact, as all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas know, Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa Himself, experiencing the *prema* of Rādhā. This is an unprecedented set of circumstances, which results in an unprecedented opportunity for those whose natural inclinations are to participate in Kṛṣṇa's eternal *mādhurya-līlā*.

This confidential knowledge related to realizing and manifesting one's eternal identity and entering Kṛṣṇa's eternal *līlā* had never been presented in such detail before Lord Caitanya's appearance. Although the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* is followed by anyone desiring to have one of the four principal *rasas* with Kṛṣṇa, in this book I will focus primarily on entering *mādhurya-rasa*, following the precedents established by the previous *ācāryas*.

Entering *mādhurya-rasa* really means to become one of the associates in Rādhā's group of *gopīs*. In other words, to become one of Rādhā's personal girlfriends, one of Her intimate *sakhīs*. That means one will then be an intimate part of the central focal point in Vraja – Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's love affair. This is the highest, most confidential realm of all. Regarding Rādhā, in *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*, Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī writes:

In the *Bhavisyottara-purāṇa*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, “O Nārada, if you have strong faith in *prema-bhakti* and you truly want to satisfy Me and obtain My mercy, then you please become a loving devotee of Śrī Rādhā.” GGSP, 189

Similarly, in the *Naradiya-purāṇa*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, “O Nārada, I solemnly declare to you again and again and again that without the mercy of Śrī Rādhā, My mercy does not arise.” GGSP, 190

By the mercy of Śrī Rādhikā, the *sādhaka* gets the association of Rādhikā's *sakhī-gana*. By the mercy of that *sakhī-gana*, one obtains birth as a young girl in Vraja. GGSP, 191

For those rare and fortunate souls who enter *mādhurya-līlā*, they will not only attain the goal of *prema* for Kṛṣṇa, but also a similar deep love for Rādhā, as well as the particular *aṣṭa-sakhī* they have taken shelter of as their chosen guide. That means three primary relationships of the most profound nature. Many loving relationships with the other *sakhīs* then expand from these three principal relationships.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains this in his commentary of *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*:

It has previously been explained in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* that attaining the position of a *gopī* cannot take place without *rāgānugā-bhakti*. And without following after the *nitya-siddha-gopīs*, *rāgānugā* cannot be perfected. *Rāgānugā* means to follow after those *gopīs* who have *rāga*. Those three types who follow the *nitya-siddhas* attain perfection like the *nitya-siddha gopīs* but they exist eternally in a slightly lesser position than the *nitya-siddha gopīs* that they follow.

...According to the principles of *rāgānugā-bhakti* a person should follow a desired *gopī* while having affection for her not less than one's affection for Kṛṣṇa. If one follows a *gopī* while having less affection for her than for Kṛṣṇa, it would not be much different from *vaidhī-bhakti*. Even *vaidhī-bhakti* cannot be perfected without following devotees. Therefore, in *rāgānugā-bhakti*, persons who desire to follow a *sakhī* with more affection for Kṛṣṇa must not have less affection for that *sakhī* than for Kṛṣṇa. UN, 8.137 commentary

This knowledge provides us with invaluable insight and understanding in our journey's quest. All of this information will be expanded in great detail in Chapter 5.

### **How does Kṛṣṇa personally reciprocate with countless individuals?**

It's natural to wonder how it is that Kṛṣṇa can reciprocate with so many millions and trillions of associates without losing the intimate nature of the rural Vṛndāvana setting. He does so by expanding Himself into unlimited identical forms to simultaneously interact with each individual according to their desired mood and relationship. Sometimes this is directly apparent as in the *rāsa-līlā* festival, even though each *gopī* thinks that Kṛṣṇa is only interacting with her, and sometimes this is not obvious, as when Kṛṣṇa is meeting different *gopīs* in the various *kuñjas* throughout the day and night.

Kṛṣṇa is truly the supreme enjoyer and the prime object of everyone's love and attention, all of whom are simply trying to give Him pleasure in an endless variety of ways. But because Kṛṣṇa is controlled by the love of his devotees, He cannot resist the force and magnetic pull of each devotee's love, and so He is compelled to respond and reciprocate with that love, according to each individual's desired mood and intensity of love. He truly is the perfect lover.

By the inconceivable potency of *yogamāyā*, the inhabitants of Goloka Vṛndāvana don't directly perceive or experience that there are countless numbers of associates. And when we read about Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs*, in many *līlās* it appears that there is just a moderate size group of *gopīs* with Rādhā, as opposed to the countless *gopīs* during *rāsa-līlā*.

The desire laden prayers of Śrī Rūpa, Śrī Raghunātha, Śrī Narottama, Śrī Viśvanātha, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda, and others, give us a clear indication that direct intimate participation in the *līlās* is possible, through the power of intense desire (*laulyam*) and the depth of one's love (*prema*).

In *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha*, Jīva Gosvāmī explains this astonishing feature of Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti*:

When Kṛṣṇa manifests His forms in many different places simultaneously, He does not have to separately create many new forms, but He simply manifests His own original form in many places at once, as He wishes, by the agency of His inconceivable potencies.

He manifests His own form in many places just as single form may be reflected in many places by the use of mirrors. A person who causes his form to be reflected in many mirrors cannot perform the functions of his senses through the reflected forms: for example he cannot see, hear, touch, and so on, through his reflected forms. This may be true for an ordinary person, but for Lord Kṛṣṇa He can see, hear, touch, and perform all sensory activities through these "reflected" forms. This is the specific potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa's expanded or "reflected" forms.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is thus, perfect and complete, and innumerable perfect and complete *viṣṇu-tattva* forms may emanate from Him, but He remains undiminished in all respects. By His inconceivable potency He may expand in many different forms simultaneously, and each of these forms may perform many different activities. This is described in *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* and other Vedic literatures and the great learned devotees also describe it and delight in learning about its evidence to prove this remarkable feature of the Lord.

Lord Kṛṣṇa's ability to be manifested in many places simultaneously and perform many different activities at the same time by His mystic potency is not shared by any one else. No *yogi* or sage can perform such wonderful activities, and therefore, Nārada Muni spoke the following verse after seeing the many expansions of the Lord at Dvārakā (*Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* 10.69.2), "It is astounding that Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is one without a second, expanded Himself in 16,000 similar forms to marry 16,000 queens in their respective homes."

By His own wish, Lord Kṛṣṇa may expand into many different forms and perform many different activities simultaneously, although the Lord's associates in those pastimes generally do not give any thought to all these wonders. An example of this is the occasion of Lord Kṛṣṇa's marriage to 16,000 queens simultaneously in the presence of Devakī-devī and His other relatives.

An astonishing feature of this pastime is described by Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmi in His commentary on *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* 10.69.2. Śrīdhara Svāmi says: "When Lord Kṛṣṇa married 16,000 queens in 16,000 palaces all at the same moment, Devakī-devī and the

Lord's other intimate relatives also became expanded and witnessed all the Lord's simultaneous marriages.”

That the intimate associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa may also appear in different forms simultaneously, just as the Lord can, is described in the following verses of *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* (10.69.20, 27), where Nārada's visit to Kṛṣṇa's palaces in Dvārakā reveals the simultaneous expansion of Uddhava, the intimate associate of the Lord:

“In one palace Nārada saw Lord Kṛṣṇa engaged in playing chess along with His dear wife and Uddhava. The Lord immediately got up from His seat and invited Nārada to sit on His personal seat. The Lord again worshiped Him with as much paraphernalia for reception as He had in the palace of Rukmiṇī. Nārada then left that palace and visited other palaces where he again saw Lord Kṛṣṇa engaged in different activities. In another palace Nārada saw Lord Kṛṣṇa consulting with ministers like Uddhava and others on important matters of business.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa appears in various forms according to the nature of His devotee's love for Him. If the devotee aspires to see the Lord in a certain way, the Lord appears in that aspect, and says to the devotee: “Here I am, just as you have desired Me.”

The Lord may sometimes appear before the devotee, and sometimes also may be far away from the devotee. For example, when Lord Kṛṣṇa played the part of the ideal husband of 16,000 wives in Dvārakā, sometimes Devakī-devī would perform her household duties in the association of her great son, and she would feel transcendental bliss.

Then again, sometimes she would not have His association, and she would long to see Him. In the same way Uddhava and the other devotees would sometimes have Lord Kṛṣṇa's association, and sometimes they would be separated from Him. This meeting and separation of the Lord and His devotees is a very wonderful activity effected by the Lord's *yogamāyā* potency. KS, *Anuccheda* 156

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary in *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*:

“If Kṛṣṇa performs pastimes with his associates eternally in different manifestations in Vṛndāvana, Mathurā and Dvārakā in one body simultaneously as illustrated in the verse, *citram bataid ekena vapuna* (SB 10.69.1), in both *prakṛta* and *aprakṛta* pastimes, then how can there be separation from Kṛṣṇa with *udghurna* and *citra-jalpa* at all?”

In order to accomplish various pastimes and to accomplish the various *bhāvas* of the *sādhaka* and *siddha* devotees, by the power of the Lord's *līlā-śakti*, separate identities of the Lord and his associates in each manifestation of pastimes and in each form, and different activities following from those identities, are established. An example of different forms is Rāma meeting with Parasurāma after breaking the bow. An example of different manifestation of pastimes is what Nārada saw in Dvārakā, by the power of *yogamāyā*. UN, 15.187

In *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, Nārada muni explains to Gopa-kumāra:

When the one Personality of Godhead simultaneously eats the items brought to Him by thousands of wives, each wife sees that she has fed Him first and that the only offering He is eating is hers. BB, 2.4.166

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

This is a good example of the mysterious nature of the Supreme Lord's pastimes, an example taken from His loving dealings with His beloved consorts. The phenomenon described in this verse occurs both in Vṛndāvana with the *gopīs* headed by Śrī Rādhā and in Dvārakā with the queens headed by Śrī Rukmiṇī.

In both abodes, Kṛṣṇa is sometimes fed at the same time by thousands of beloveds, each of whom sees Him accept only her offering. All of them are absolutely devoted to Him, and so He does not want to disappoint any of them. By being especially attentive to each one individually, He expertly increases the stimulus for their love.

He does this factually, not by some illusory trick. The best examples of the wonderful ways the Lord receives service from His potencies are found in the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in which both His opulence and His sweetness are fully displayed.

In *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, Sarūpa (Gopa-kumāra) describes an example of this feature of Kṛṣṇa as it is displayed in Vraja:

Kṛṣṇa, served by all those *gopīs*, their hearts melting in great affection for Him, responded by giving to each one, unseen by the others, the prized remnants of His chewed pān. BB, 2.6.143

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

Kṛṣṇa is more eager to fulfill the desires of His devotees than to receive their service. On this occasion He gave the *prasāda* of His *pān* to all the *gopīs*. This does not mean, however, that Kṛṣṇa treated all the *gopīs* exactly the same way; He reciprocated with each of them individually, unseen by the others.

This amazing capability of Kṛṣṇa is inconceivable for humans to comprehend, but it is one of many confidential truths about God's amazing potencies and personal loving affairs. Knowing that such intimate association is accessible to anyone, based completely on sincere and genuine love, who would not be attracted to take part in these pastimes? And understanding the full import of this truth, who would not make this their primary goal in life, to the subordination of everything else?

## Chapter 3 – Rāgānugā-bhakti – its sādhana and bhajana

### In this Chapter...

In this chapter I will examine all of the key elements of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. First I'll discuss *sādhana-bhakti*, its primary components, and the eight stages of its development. I'll examine *rāga* as the foundation of *rāgānugā-bhakti* and *lobha* and *laulyam* as the entry qualification for *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Then I'll analyze the differences between *vaidhī-bhakti* and *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

After that, I'll present an overview of the two main types of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Then, I'll analyze the key elements of *rāgānugā-sādhana* and *bhajana* in preparation for the more detailed analysis in Chapter 5. I'll often refer to Chapter 5 as “later” throughout this chapter to avoid annoying repetition.

The chapter ends with an analytical look at the relevance of the *śruti-smṛti-purānādi* verse to *rāgānugā-bhakti*, as quoted in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, and mentioned numerous times by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

### Sādhana-bhakti – the primary elements and the eight steps to prema

The second Chapter of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* is entitled, *Sādhana-bhakti*. Therein, Rūpa Gosvāmī provides a detailed analysis of the two types of *sādhana-bhakti*: *vaidhī* and *rāgānugā*. *Sādhana-bhakti* of either type is performed specifically to reach the goal of *prema*, which first manifests as *bhāva*. Therefore, by engaging in *sādhana-bhakti*, one attains *bhāva-bhakti*, the preliminary stage of perfection leading directly to *prema-bhakti*. Rūpa Gosvāmī explains:

Now, *sādhana-bhakti* will be defined: Actions of the senses, which produces the stage of *bhāva*, are called, *sādhana-bhakti*. This attuned state of *bhāva-bhakti* is an eternal *sthāyī-bhāva* which is not created, but simply manifests within the soul by the spiritual energy of the Lord. BRS, 1.2.2

In the *ācāryas'* writings, especially Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, we learn that *sādhana-bhakti* has numerous rules, regulations, offenses, processes, stages, *aṅgas*, levels and so on. One can easily become confused trying to make sense of so many interconnected elements, especially as it relates to one's own *sādhana*. As such, I will isolate the items that are most relevant to our study so we can move forward with a clear and focused perspective.

*Sadhana-bhakti* is *bhakti* in practice, using the senses, mind and intelligence. In *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Rūpa Gosvāmī lists the sixty-four most well known limbs – *aṅgas* – or types of activities that constitute *sādhana-bhakti*, and which have been classified as being directly part of *bhakti* in practice. Of the first twenty items listed by Śrī Rūpa (BRS, 1.2.72-82), the first three are said to be the most important, as he explains:



These twenty *aṅgas* serve as the door for entering *bhakti*. The first three *aṅgas* are said to be the principal ones...

- (1) taking shelter of the feet of a *guru*
- (2) receiving teachings from the *guru* after initiation
- (3) serving the *guru* with respect

BRS, 1.2.83

Śrī Rūpa then lists the remaining forty-four items (BRS, 1.2.84-92), of which, the last five are the most important:

The last five items were mentioned previously. They have been mentioned again to point out their superiority among all *aṅgas*. BRS, 1.2.93

The last five *aṅgas* are:

- (1) Having faith and great affection for serving the Deity.
- (2) Relishing *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* in the association of devotees
- (3) Associating with like-minded, affectionate, superior devotees
- (4) *Nāma-saṅkīrtana*
- (5) Living in the area of Mathurā/Vṛndāvana (or living there within one's mind)

More about these particular five items:

The last five items (BRS, 1.2.90-92) have inconceivable and astonishing power. What to speak of having faith in these items, if there is just a little relationship with these items, persons who are devoid of offenses can attain the level of *bhāva*. BRS, 1.2.238

Śrī Rūpa then presents five verses to further emphasize the potency of each of these five items, and follows with:

The inconceivable power of these extraordinary five *aṅgas* is such that it will manifest the state of *bhāva* and its object, Kṛṣṇa, at the same time. BRS, 1.2.244

Besides these sixty-four items, we constantly hear about *navadhā-bhakti*, the nine main activities of *sādhana-bhakti*, as given by Prahlada Mahārāja in his very famous verses from *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*:

*śrī-prahrāda uvāca*  
*śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇaṁ pāda-sevanam*  
*arcanaṁ vandanam dāsyam sakhyam ātma-nivedanam*

*iti puṁsārpitā viṣṇu bhaktiś cen nava-lakṣaṇā*  
*kriyeta bhagavatya addhā tan manye 'dhītam uttamam*

Prahlada Mahārāja said: Hearing and chanting about the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes of Lord Viṣṇu, remembering them, serving the lotus feet of the Lord, offering the Lord respectful worship with sixteen types of paraphernalia, offering prayers to the Lord, becoming His servant, considering the Lord one's best friend, and surrendering everything unto Him (in other words, serving Him with the body, mind and words).

These nine processes are accepted as pure devotional service. One who has dedicated his life to the service of Kṛṣṇa through these nine methods should be understood to be the most learned person, for he has acquired complete knowledge. SB, 7.5.23-24

It is overwhelmingly clear from the writings of the *ācāryas* that these nine items, namely, hearing, chanting, remembering, worshipping and so on, are *the* primary focus of *sādhana-bhakti*, whether it be *vaidhī* or *rāgānugā*. In addition, hearing, chanting and remembering continue on as *aṅgas* of *prema-bhakti*, where they are no longer part of one's practice, but part of the eternal activities of *prema-bhakti-rasa* in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*.

At this point in our review, we have the three main doorway *aṅgas*, the five powerful foundational *aṅgas* and the nine dynamic *aṅgas*, which are integral parts of the foundational *aṅgas*. All other *aṅgas* expand from there.

These core groups of elements form the essential basis of *sādhana-bhakti* which support and propel a *sādhaka* along the path of *sādhana-bhakti* through the eight stages of progressive development that mark one's progress on the *bhakti* path. Now let's look at the eight stages in detail.

In *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī identifies and elaborates on these eight stages of progress, through which all Vaiṣṇava practitioners must traverse – from *śraddhā* to *bhāva*. He dedicates a separate chapter for each stage, to explore various aspects. The final stage is *prema*, the goal (*prayojana*). This eight-fold path is presented in two famous verses from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, where Rūpa Gosvāmī explains the stages of progress:

*adau śraddhā tatah sādhu-sango'tha bhajana-kriyā  
tato'nartha-nivṛtīh syat tato niṣṭhā rucis tatah*

*athāsaktis tato bhāvas tatah premabhyudaṣcati  
sādhakanam ayam premnah pradurbhave bhavet kramah*

First, there is association with devotees, by which one gains faith (*śraddhā*). Then, one associates with the devotees (*sādhu-saṅga*) to learn the scriptures, and then practices *bhakti* (*bhajana-kriyā*). The *anarthas* are then destroyed (*anartha-nivṛtti*). Steady *bhakti* without confusion (*niṣṭhā*) follows. Desire (*ruci*) for the Lord appears. This is followed by spontaneous desire (*āsakti*) for the Lord. This becomes *bhāva* and then *prema*. This is the progression for manifesting *prema* for those performing *sādhana-bhakti*. BRS, 1.4.15-16

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

Though there are many steps in the progression of *bhakti*, the most common sequence is stated in two verses. In the beginning (*adau*), by hearing the scriptures in association with the devotees, one attains faith (*śraddhā*). *Śraddhā* means trust or confidence. Then, after faith appears, again association with devotees (*sādhū-saṅga*) takes place, for learning how to practice *bhakti* (*bhajana-kriyā*). *Niṣṭhā* means continuous *bhakti* without confusion. *Ruci* means desire for the Lord, but with direction by the intellect. *Āsakti* means desire, which is natural or spontaneous (without intellectual direction).

This is the path of *bhakti* followed by all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. As mentioned earlier, this book focuses on the final five stages of the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, starting with *anartha-nivṛtti*, then *niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, *āsakti*, and *bhāva*, leading directly to *prema*. This roadmap should be permanently stored in the GPS system of one's spiritual intelligence.

Here again is the breakdown of the last five stages, including the goal (*prema*), as we presented them in the **Introduction**:

*anartha-nivṛtti* – diminishing and removal of activities and behaviors unfavorable to *bhakti*

*niṣṭhā* – unshakable faith and steadiness in *sādhana* and *bhajana*

*ruci* – experiencing a genuine taste and attraction for Kṛṣṇa from *sādhana* and *bhajana*

*āsakti* – deep attachment to Kṛṣṇa and immersion in chanting and *līlā-smaraṇam*

*bhāva* – awakening of *prema*, realization of your eternal identity and form, and direct *darsan* of Kṛṣṇa

*prema* – direct involvement internally in the eternal *līlā* while developing the first stages of *prema*

In the last three chapters of this book I will examine these stages in detail, specifically as it relates to realizing your eternal identity. Chapter 4 focuses on *anartha-nivṛtti* and *niṣṭhā*, and Chapter 5 examines all of the details related to the realization and manifestation of your identity that take place primarily during *ruci* and *āsakti*. In Chapter 6 I'll discuss *bhāva*, *rati*, *prema*, *rasa*, and *bhajana* in separation. Next in this chapter, we'll look at *rāga*, and then *lobha* and *laulyam*.

### **Rāga – attachment and absorption**

*Rāga* and *lobha* – attachment and greed – don't appear to be very spiritual qualities, but they are in fact, two very important working principles within *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Indeed they are the key ingredients, without which, there is no possibility of entering the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. *Rāgānugā* literally means, "following the path of *rāga*". First we'll discuss *rāga* – attachment. In the next section we'll discuss *lobha* – spiritual greed.

*Rāga* is more than just an attraction for an object or a person. It implies an intense, irresistible, spontaneous absorption in, and attachment to, the object or person of one's attraction. There is nothing casual about *rāga*, but there are varying degrees of intensity. It is a compelling obsession that is difficult to resist, if at all.

Everyone has experienced *rāga* to one degree or another in conjunction with material objects or persons. Serious artists and athletes always have *rāga* for their specific individual activities. Wall Street bankers and corporate CEOs have *rāga* for wealth and power. And almost everyone has experienced *rāga* in conjunction with romantic love for another person, with stalkers being the extreme version.

These are examples of mundane *rāga* in this temporary material existence (*viṣaya rāga*), but the concept and principles are exactly the same when applied to spiritual *rāga*, the differences being the object of *rāga* and the underlying motivations and consciousness. *Rāga* in *rāgānugā-bhakti* has only one object of attachment and attraction – Kṛṣṇa – and that attachment is rooted in pure spiritual love – *prema*. However, as we will see, for those aspiring for *mādhurya-rasa*, *Rādhā* is also an equal object of attachment and love.

*Rāga* cannot be induced or aroused by any mechanical practices or methods. It is by nature spontaneous and natural, and it arises in one's heart due to the purification from sincere and honest *sādhana-bhakti* practiced for many lifetimes. *Rāgānugā-bhakti* is not merely being attracted to Kṛṣṇa, but rather, it is an attachment and absorption which causes a deep singular focus on Kṛṣṇa. *Rāga* is described and discussed in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

*Rāga* is defined as spontaneous deep thirst for the object of love. *Bhakti* that is impelled exclusively by such a thirst is called *rāgātmikā-bhakti* (the *bhakti* of the Vraja residents). BRS, 1.2.272

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

*Iste* refers to the person towards whom one has loving sentiments. *Svarasiki* means natural or spontaneous. *Paramavistata* (extreme engrossment) actually means, "thirst intrinsic to *prema*," which is the cause of being engrossed. Thus, *rāga* is defined as, "spontaneous intense thirst for one's object of love." The cause – the love thirst – is considered non-different from the effect – deep absorption – because of its extremely strong connection as the cause.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

Spontaneous (*svarasiki*) absorption (*paramavistata*) in one's object of love (*iste*) is called *rāga*. The word *avistata* (*absorption*) is the same as its cause. Thus, it infers the love-filled thirst that gives rise to the absorption. That thirst is called *rāga*.

...Thus, the complete meaning of the sentence is, "That love-filled thirst, or actions inspired by it, such as stringing garlands for Kṛṣṇa, which generates complete absorption in the object of love, is called, *rāgātmikā-bhakti*." There is no fault in this *rāga* even though it may not conform to expected rules.

These are descriptions of the *rāga* exhibited by the residents of Vraja, especially the *gopīs*. The *gopīs*' *rāga* is the highest ideal which is aspired for by those wishing to enter the eternal Vraja pastimes in *mādhurya-rasa*. The *vraja-vāsīs*' *bhakti* is known as *rāgātmikā-bhakti*, and those following in their footsteps are on the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* – following the *rāga* of the *rāgātmikā vraja-vāsīs*.

*Rāgānugā-bhakti* is defined as that *bhakti* which follows after the *rāgātmikā-bhakti* found distinctively in the inhabitants of Vraja. BRS, 1.2.270

### **Lobha and laulyam – greed and intense longing**

Hearing or even seeing the word “greed” in today’s world, will almost certainly evoke thoughts of the world’s corrupt bankers and their astonishing avarice for more and more wealth and power. Due to them, greed has become even more of a pejorative term. Most people have a hard time imagining that kind of intense attachment, solely for increasing one’s wealth and influence, especially when these people already have more than enough of both.

In the movie Wall Street, Gordon Gekko said, “Greed is good.” On the opposite end of the spectrum, greed is generally considered to be the height of selfishness and it is always shunned by people with evolved integrity. Considering all of this, is it possible that greed could ever be something good, or desirable, or even spiritual and absolutely necessary?

There is said to be an original spiritual counterpart for everything we experience in the material world, and thus, there is actually spiritual greed – *lobha* – or *laulyam*, meaning very intense desire or longing. The *ācāryas* use the same word, *lobha*, when referring to both material and spiritual greed and the differentiation between the two meanings is a matter of context. Greed for material objects keeps you trapped in the material world, and greed for a relationship with Kṛṣṇa delivers you to His lotus feet.

Material greed manifests in the intelligence, mind and heart and can become extremely powerful. It can easily become an obsession. That same laser-sharp focus and intensity of spiritual greed would propel one very quickly towards *prema-bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa. As we will repeatedly see, *rāgānugā-bhakti* is truly all about one’s desires in conjunction with Kṛṣṇa. The more intense, the better.

If one has not been blessed with spiritual *lobha*, it should be the first thing on one’s list of desires for powerful motivators in *rāgānugā-bhakti*. More than just a motivator though, it is an absolutely essential component part of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, and it is factually *the* single prerequisite qualification for even beginning *rāgānugā-bhakti* in earnest.

The intensity of the desires of the *vraja-vāsīs* is greater than all other groups of devotees in Kṛṣṇa’s unlimited pastimes throughout His endless spiritual realms. Those devotees desiring to participate in the pastimes with the *vraja-vāsīs* must also attain the same level of intensity in their desires, imbued with *prema*. If we want to be with them, we have to become just like them

by following their examples. That is one aspect of the identity transformation that takes place through *rāgānuga-bhakti*.

Sanātana Gosvāmī describes the expanding nature of the *vraja-vāsīs* desires in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

Yet none of them ever become satiated. Their love shows a thirst that is the mother of sheer humility and that simply grows stronger and stronger. BB, 2.6.213

From Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

The devotees' thirst for having more and more of Kṛṣṇa is unquenchable and ever increasing, without limit. The phrase *prema-tṛṣṇā*, the "thirst of pure love," means *lobha* (greed).

It's surprising that many devotees are not aware of how important and crucial this greed is with regard to *rāgānuga-bhakti*. *Rāga* is the fundamental nature of *rāgānuga-bhakti*, and *lobha* is the fundamental qualification for practicing its *sādhana* and *bhajan*. In the beginning, one's *rāga* and *lobha* may not be so strong, but they develop and grow over time, mutually nourishing one another.

*Lobha* for Kṛṣṇa can only arise if there is an initial attraction and attachment – *rāga*. As ironic as it sounds, we have to first *desire* to have this spiritual greed. We must *want* to be greedy for Kṛṣṇa! Those initial desires are awakened by *sādhana-bhakti*, and especially through hearing about Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, which directly nourishes the attraction to be part of them.

*Lobha*, greed, cannot be induced mechanically. It is not the result of performing a certain quantity of *sādhana*. It is not directly dependent on the number of rounds one chants. One may engage in *sādhana* for many lifetimes and still not obtain *lobha*. *Lobha* is in fact, a gift of mercy bestowed directly by Kṛṣṇa or a Vaiṣṇava who is absorbed in *rāgānuga-bhakti* (*rasika*). There is no other way to acquire *lobha*.

Considering the sublime nature of this gift, and its potency, it stands to reason that it will not likely be bestowed if a person is not ready and willing to take full advantage of such rarely obtained and very special mercy. Now let's hear more of what the *ācāryas* have to say about *lobha*.

Rūpa Gosvāmī explains the qualification for *rāgānuga-bhakti* in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

The qualification for *rāgānuga-bhakti* is as follows: That person who is greedy for attaining a *bhāva* similar to that of the inhabitants of Vraja – who are fixed solely in *rāgātmikā-bhakti* – is qualified for *rāgānuga-bhakti*. BRS, 1.2.291

Viśvanātha Cakravartī elaborates on this verse after quoting it in *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*:

If one thinks, "let such greed arise in me also", after hearing about moods such as the transcendental conjugal mood toward Kṛṣṇa of His associates, the *gopīs* in Vraja, then one

need not wait for suitable sanctions from the revealed scriptures or logical arguments. If such impetuses are there (i.e., suitable sanctions or logical arguments), then it cannot be justly called greed.

**This greed never arises in anyone on such basis, nor does the candidate ever consider whether or not he is qualified for the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Rather, simply after hearing about the subject matter, or seeing it, that greed will arise in him.**

These last statements are particularly important. Whenever any of the previous *ācāryas* discuss the qualifications for practicing *rāgānugā-bhakti*, they always and only refer to *lobha* as the primary qualification, defined simply as an intense desire to attain *prema* and enter Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes in a particular *rasa*, following a *vraja-vāsī*. No other qualifications are given.

In *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Rūpa Gosvāmī explains *lobha* in relation to *rāgānugā-bhakti*:

The appearance of that greed is indicated when the intelligence does not depend on rules of scripture and logic, after realizing to some degree the sweetness of their (the inhabitants of Vraja) love through the process of hearing from the scriptures. BRS, 1.2.292

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

When a person realizes to some degree the sweetness of the love and activities of the inhabitants of Vraja through hearing from the scriptures, such as the *Bhāgavatam*, which describe these *siddha* devotees, his intelligence may develop disregard for the injunctions of scripture and logic, though logic is certainly employed.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

One can infer that greed has arisen in the person from recognizing this symptom. Nevertheless, it is not possible to say that the condition described is the real essence of that greed, because that greed does not always include disregard for scriptural injunctions and logic as a necessary component.

Another corroborating point to note here is that both Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Jīva state, "When a person realizes **to some degree**." This indicates that the initial attraction to the love and activities of the *vraja-vāsīs*, does not have to be fully developed to begin the process. Jīva Gosvāmī confirms and clarifies this same point further in his *Bhakti-sandarbhā*:

For this reason we will now discuss *rāgānugā-bhakti*, the practice of devotion following in the wake of the moods of natural affection. When a person develops a taste for the aforesaid specific *rāga* (i.e., for any of the four primary *rasas*), **even though that *rāga* itself has not arisen in her or him, the heart becomes like a crystal, shining as it reflects the rays of the moon of that *rāga*.**

By hearing about this *rāga* from scripture or from one's teacher, one develops a taste for the actions of the *rāgātmikā* associates also, that are expressions of this *rāgātmikā-bhakti*. Then

by adhering to the *rāga* of a particular associate of the Lord, according to one's taste, one executes devotion, which is called *rāgānugā*. BS, Anuccheda 310

In *Jaiva-dharma*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gives his unique perspective on *lobha* in conjunction with *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Following a discussion about *rāga*, we begin with a statement about a *sādhaka* who doesn't yet have *rāga*:

Bābāji: ...It is auspicious that a person in whose heart such *rāga* has not arisen should strive to cultivate such *bhakti* by behaving according to *vidhi* (the rules and regulations of *śāstra*). The principles at work in *vaidhī-bhakti* are fear, respect and reverence, whereas the only principle at work in *rāgātmikā-bhakti* is *lobha*, or greed, in relation to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*.

Vrajanatha: Who has the *adhikāra* (qualification) for *rāgamayi bhakti*?

Bābāji: *Vaidhī-śraddhā* bestows the *adhikāra* for *vaidhī-bhakti*, and similarly, *lobhamayi śraddhā* (faith imbued with greed for Kṛṣṇa's *vraja-līlā*) bestows the *adhikāra* for *rāgamayi bhakti*. The *bhāva* of the *vraja-vāsīs* towards Kṛṣṇa is the supreme example of *rāgātmikā-bhakti*. **One who has the great fortune to have greed (*lobha*) to obtain the same *bhāva* as the *vraja-vāsīs* have towards Kṛṣṇa has the *adhikāra* for *rāgānugā-bhakti*.**

Vrajanatha: What are the symptoms of such *lobha*?

Bābāji: When one hears about the intensely sweet *bhāvas* of the *vraja-vāsīs*, one's intelligence begins to consider how one may enter into those dealings. **That desire is the symptom that *lobha* has awakened.**

A person who has the *adhikāra* for *vaidhī-bhakti* tests everything on the platform of intelligence, knowledge of *śāstra*, and reasoning; and when he hears *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, he only accepts it if these three support it.

However, there is no such consideration in *rāga-mārga*, for intelligence, knowledge of *śāstra*, and reasoning are not desired on this path. **All that is needed is the greed for the sentiments of the *vraja-vāsīs*:** "What are the sweet *bhāvas* of the *vraja-vāsīs* towards Kṛṣṇa? Is it possible for me to obtain such *bhāvas*? How can this be obtained?"

**This intense yearning is the symptom of greed, and one who does not have it does not have the *adhikāra* for *rāgānugā-bhakti*.** This you should understand. JD, Chapter 21

Very clear, consistent and powerful statements from our *ācāryas* about greed, *lobha*. Not one of them mentioned anything about first being freed from all *anarthas* and material desires, or being very advanced, or even purity, nor do they mention those things anywhere else in conjunction with being qualified for *rāgānugā-bhakti*. They all said – greed, *lobha* is the sole qualification to begin this process. In fact, Viśvanātha Cakravartī even went as far as to say that, "nor does the candidate ever consider whether or not he is qualified for the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*."

As we will learn in the next chapter, only after the stage of *bhāva*, when *bhāva* matures into *prema*, are all *anarthas* and material desires completely destroyed. That being said, it is also



understood that a person who is truly ready for this path, will have undergone a significant amount of *anartha-nivṛtti* to come to that point.

What then, are the causes of this rare *lobha* – spiritual greed? In *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains very revealing details regarding this greed:

There are two causes for the appearance of greed:

- (1) the mercy of Kṛṣṇa
- (2) the mercy of another *anurāgi* devotee

There are again two kinds of mercy bestowed by a devotee:

- (1) mercy bestowed by a *rāgānugā* devotee in a previous life – *praktana*
- (2) mercy bestowed by a *rāgānugā* devotee in the present birth – *adhunika*

The *praktana* devotee takes shelter of the lotus feet of a *rāgānugā guru* after the greed has arisen in him, and the *adhunika* will get that greed only after having surrendered to the feet of such a *guru*.

It is said (BRS, 1.2.309): “The only causes of the appearance of greed are the mercy of Kṛṣṇa or His devotee. Therefore, some call the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, *pusti mārga* (the path of mercy).” RVC, 1.6

In the case of the *praktana* devotees, we now learn that such devotees had already acquired *lobha* in a previous life, but for whatever reasons, they did not perfect their *sādhana* and attain *bhāva* in that previous life, so in this life that same greed eventually becomes awakened in them even *before* they have taken shelter of a *rāgānugā guru*. The *adhunika* devotees get this greed from a *rāgānugā guru*, after surrendering to the *guru*.

Thus, it is abundantly clear that the qualification for entering the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* is mercy alone, specifically in the form of *lobha*, bestowed by Kṛṣṇa or one of His *rasika* devotees. No other qualifications are given by any of the *ācāryas* we are studying, and all of them are in complete agreement about *lobha*.

Śrī Viśvanātha continues his discussion on *lobha* in *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, confirming that one may enter the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* even from the beginning stage of accepting a *guru*:

Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself describes in *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, 11.14.26, how the devotee on the path of greed advances and becomes more purified by the day, from the initial stage of surrender to the feet of a *guru* up to the point in which he directly attains the Lord:

“The more one’s mind gets purified by hearing and chanting of My beautiful pastimes, the more one is able to discern the subtle reality of the self, just as the eye is better able to perceive subtle things when it is treated with medicinal ointment.” RVC, 1.8

Śrī Viśvanātha then describes how a devotee motivated by greed receives knowledge and makes progress on the path:

When this greed has appeared in the heart, one becomes enlightened in different ways. Uddhava says in *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, 11.29.6: “Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself through the *ācārya* or through the agency of the Supersoul.”

Thus, some devotees attain knowledge about the moods of Kṛṣṇa and His Vraja associates from the mouth of a *guru*, some from the mouth of a learned *rāgānugā* devotee, and some, whose hearts have been purified by the practice of devotional service, will have this knowledge directly revealed to them from within their hearts. They advance in great transcendental bliss, just as one sees a lusty man enjoying great pleasure when his desires are fulfilled. RVC, 1.9

Very interesting analogy in that last sentence. Once entering the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, many other factors come into play, as we will soon learn, but *lobha* always remains the underlying powerful force for progress on this path, and it continues even after attaining *prema*, as we heard initially from Sanātana Gosvāmī regarding the ever expanding greed of the *vraja-vāsīs*. Spiritual *lobha* is ultimately Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, and the more you take advantage of its potency, the more you will receive.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains the incredible potency of *lobha* in *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*:

In *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* it is said that, “those who are especially attracted to the mood of the *vraja-vāsīs* and thus, perform *rāgānugā-bhakti*, will attain that abundance of eagerness that is needed for performing *rāgānugā-bhajana* and will take birth in Vraja in groups of one, two or three at the same time.” Here the word *anurāgaugha* means “that eagerness that makes one qualified for doing *rāgānugā-bhajana*”. RVC, 2.7

And finally, absolute confirmation about the essential importance of *lobha* and *laulyam* comes from Rāmānanda Rāya, who made this emphatic statement to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu about greed, when he began his discussions about *rāgānuga-bhakti* in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

Pure devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness (*kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvita*) cannot be had even by pious activity in hundreds and thousands of lives. **It can be attained only by paying one price – that is, intense greed (*laulyam*) to obtain it.** If it is available somewhere, one must purchase it without delay. CC, 2.8.70

### ***Vaidhī-bhakti* and *rāgānugā-bhakti* – different paths, different results**

*Bhakti* in general implies love and service to God in a deeply devotional mood. *Rāgānugā-bhakti* in particular implies a deep attachment and attraction to Kṛṣṇa in an intimate, personal, loving mood, following the *bhāvas* of the *vraja-vāsīs*. *Rāgānugā-bhakti* facilitates all of this by its processes, both external and internal.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu revealed the principles and essence of *rāgānugā-bhakti* by His personal example. That was one of the primary reasons for His appearance. He certainly explained *vaidhī-bhakti* in detail, but by His personal example He did not teach *vaidhī-bhakti* as the primary path to Kṛṣṇa *prema*. He played the part of a *rāgānugā-bhakta*.

Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* is the definitive book of essential knowledge regarding *bhakti*, as taught to him directly by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In their writings, all of the *ācāryas* have discussed the differences between *vaidhī-bhakti* and *rāgānugā-bhakti* in detail, as originally delineated by Rūpa Gosvāmī.

Most Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas are generally aware of these differences, but as usual there are numerous aspects of these two paths that are not clearly understood by many devotees. In this section, we will examine those differences, as well as the motivations and qualifications for practicing each path. Understanding these differences is of critical importance for Vaiṣṇava practitioners.

*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* explains both *vaidhī-bhakti* and *rāgānugā-bhakti*, but the book's main focus is clearly on *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Śrī Rūpa sets forth the essential regulations and principles (*aṅgas*) of *vaidhī-bhakti*, but he focuses on *rāgānugā-bhakti* and its fruits, because *rāgānugā-bhakti* is the only means to attain *prema-bhakti* in the eternal Vraja pastimes with Kṛṣṇa. To begin his discussion, Śrī Rūpa compares the two paths:

Some persons call *vaidhī-bhakti* the path of rules (*maryada-mārga*), because it is bound by strong limitation of the rules mentioned in the scriptures. BRS, 1.2.269

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

If the rules spoken in the scriptures are prominent in one's devotional process, that immediately becomes the cause for performing *bhakti*. This *vaidhī-bhakti*, filled with rules, is called *maryada-mārga*, by some people.

Śrī Rūpa continues:

*Rāgānugā-bhakti* is defined as that *bhakti* which follows after the *rāgātmikā-bhakti* found distinctively in the inhabitants of Vraja. BRS, 1.2.270

Many devotees are unaware that there were editing errors discovered in the original printed version of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Nectar of Devotion, in the first few pages of the chapter on *rāgānuga-bhakti*. The errors have since been corrected. In the original version, the *bhakti* of the *vraja-vāsīs* was identified as *rāgānuga-bhakti* and the path to follow them was called *rāgātmikā-bhakti*. This is exactly the opposite of what we just read above – the *vraja-vāsīs* have *rāgātmikā-bhakti* and to attain that same type of *bhakti*, one must follow the path of *rāgānuga-bhakti*. All of the *ācāryas* concur with this in their books.

By executing *vaidhī-bhakti* one can attain a relationship with Viṣṇu in Vaikuṅṭha, or Kṛṣṇa in Mathurā or Dvārakā, but by *vaidhī-bhakti* alone one cannot gain entrance to Goloka Vṛndāvana.

This is confirmed repeatedly in the teachings of Jīva Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and other *ācāryas* as we will see further on.

This is the first key difference to understand: *rāgānugā-bhakti* impelled by intense greed (*lobha*) is the only means to enter Goloka in one of the four primary *rasas* with Kṛṣṇa – *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya*. There is no other method. *Vaidhī-bhakti* cannot take you there.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains this in *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*:

When one is greedy after *mādhurya bhāva*, but one holds onto the *vidhī-mārga*, one attains the position of an associate of Satyabhāmā in Dvārakā's *svakīya-rasa*, knowing that Rādhā and Satyabhāmā are one. This is a blend of *aiśvarya jñāna* and *mādhurya jñāna*.

And when one worships solely on the path of *rāga*, one attains pure *mādhurya* and the position of an associate of Śrīmatī Rādhārānī in Vṛndāvana's *parakīya-bhāva*. RVC, 2.6

In *Adi-līlā* of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī reveals Kṛṣṇa's mind regarding His desire to appear as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

“Everywhere in the world people worship Me according to scriptural injunctions (*vidhī-bhakti*). But simply by following such regulative principles (*vidhī-bhakti*) one cannot attain the loving sentiments of the devotees in *vraja-bhūmi*. CC, 1.3.15

“Knowing My opulences, the whole world looks upon Me with awe and veneration. But devotion made feeble by such reverence does not attract Me. CC, 1.3.16

“By performing such regulated devotional service (*vidhī-bhajana*) in awe and veneration, one may go to Vaikuṅṭha and attain the four kinds of liberation. CC, 1.3.17

In *Madhya-līlā* of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Rāmānanda Rāya explains this in more detail to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

The word, *anghri-padma-sudha*, means, “associating intimately with Kṛṣṇa.” One can attain such perfection only by spontaneous love of God (*rāga-mārga*). **One cannot obtain Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana simply by serving Him according to regulative principles (*vidhī-mārga*).** CC, 2.8.226

Therefore, one should accept the mood of the *gopīs* and meditate on the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa both night and day. CC, 2.8.228

One should meditate on one's mentally conceived spiritual body (*siddha-deha*) and use it to serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. By doing so, one will attain the direct association of Their lotus feet. CC, 2.8.229

If one does not follow in the footsteps of the *gopīs* and remains absorbed in the consciousness of the Lord's majesty, he cannot attain the service of the lotus feet of the son of Nanda Mahārāja, even though he may be engaged in devotional service. CC, 2.8.230

In his *Bhakti-sandarbha*, Jīva Gosvāmī compares *vaidhī* and *rāgānugā* after explaining that *rāgānugā* does not depend on scriptural injunctions. Here are some highlights:

...Therefore, *vaidhī-bhakti* is weak because it depends on scriptural injunctions, whereas *rāgānugā* is very powerful being propelled independently. Therefore, when *rāgānugā* appears, it is marked by an absence of taste for anything unrelated to *bhakti*.

...Because *rāgānugā* is independent of any injunctions, the *dāsyā* and *sakhya* of *rāgānugā* are different from the *dāsyā* and *sakhya* of *vaidhī*.

...Therefore, in *rāgānugā*, the system prescribed for *vaidhī-bhakti* is not strictly followed, but only the methodology that relates to the *rāgātmikā* associates of the Lord. BS, *Anuccheda* 310

...So, because it is specifically the adoption of *rāgānugā* worship that quickly leads to this absorption in Him, Kṛṣṇa has not spoken about *vaidhī* worship in regard to Himself in the eleventh canto of *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, rather, the discussion of *vaidhī* there relates only to His four-armed feature. BS, *Anuccheda* 325

Not only are the destinations of both paths different, but as Viśvanātha Cakravartī and Jīva Gosvāmī both mentioned above, the *dāsyā*, *sakhya* and *mādhurya rasas* attained through *rāgānugā* are different from that of *vaidhī*, meaning they each foster different moods of *bhāva* and *prema* for Kṛṣṇa. Although the primary *aṅgas* (hearing, chanting, and so on) and the stages of development are the same for both *rāgānugā* and *vaidhī*, the results are different.

In *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains the two types of *bhāva* that arise depending on the type of *sādhana-bhakti* you have been practicing:

This stage of *bhāva* is of two types:

- (1) *bhāva* arising from *rāgānugā-bhakti*
- (2) *bhāva* arising from *vaidhī-bhakti*

*Bhāva* arising from *rāgānugā-bhakti*, being excessive in quality and quantity, is very thick or intense. It is characterized by an absence of awe and reverence, with a predominance of the feeling that the Lord is on an equal or lower level.

The second type, arising from *vaidhī-bhakti*, being somewhat lesser in quality and quantity than the first, with a type of affection for the Lord mixed with perception of the Lord as the all-mighty God, is not so thick.

Those two types of *bhāva* are tasted in two different ways in the two types of hearts possessed of two types of spiritual desires in two types of devotees. As there are different degrees of thickness in the juices of mango, jack fruit, sugar cane or grapes, there are different degrees of sweetness of *bhāva*. MK, 7.4

All of the descriptions in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* of the four primary Vraja *rasas* – *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, and *mādhurya*, along with the different types of *bhāvas* that arise within Vraja *rati* and *prema*, apply exclusively to that which is attained by *rāgānugā-bhakti*, not *vaidhī-bhakti*. No similar detailed descriptions are given for *vaidhī-bhaktas*, although there is an occasional mention of Kṛṣṇa’s *rasas* with his queens and associates in Dvārakā and Mathurā.

Another important point is that the commonly held notion that everyone must first engage in *vaidhī-bhakti* and then graduate to *rāgānugā-bhakti* is not always true. Although it may often be the case, it is definitely not a mandatory sequential process, and the transition from *vaidhī* to *rāgānugā* does not always take place either.

It all depends on one’s heart and mindset, which is either a fear-based strict attachment to rules and regulations or a natural attraction and attachment to Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes in Vraja. *Vaidhī-bhakti* is suitable for those who don’t yet have a spontaneous attraction to join Kṛṣṇa in His *vraja-līlā*, along with a natural taste for *bhakti*.

Jīva Gosvāmī explains this in *Bhakti-sandarbha*:

O King, having taken to the path [of devotion], a person is never deviated. Even if he were to run along the path with eyes closed, he would neither slip nor fall. SB, 11.2.35

By this principle it is understood that the path consisting of rules and regulations has been created in order to facilitate proper entry upon the path of perfection by initiating some form of practice, as well as to lead the mind gradually to the point of absorption in devotion.

...The rules and regulations are not created for one who is naturally drawn to devotion, because by taste alone, such a person will be absorbed in the specific manner of *rāgātmikā* devotion, which captivates the Lord. BS, *Anuccheda* 312

Near the end of the chapter on *Prema-bhakti* in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Rūpa Gosvāmī explains the different goals achieved by practitioners of *vaidhī-bhakti* and *rāgānugā-bhakti*, implying that *vaidhī-bhakti* does not always lead to *rāgānugā-bhakti*:

Those who have practiced *vaidhī-bhakti* attain *prema* with knowledge of the Lord’s powers. Those who have practiced *rāgānugā-bhakti* usually attain *prema* with knowledge of the Lord’s sweetness. BRS, 1.4.14

Jīva Gosvāmī’s commentary:

Generally, from *rāgānugā-sādhana*, one will attain *kevala-prema* (Vraja *prema*). However, the practitioner of *rāgānugā*, who also practices some portion of *vaidhī-sādhana*, does not receive *kevala-prema*. That is the meaning of the word, “generally.”

If one initially has the mindset for *vaidhī-bhakti* and by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa or a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava obtains *lobha* for associating with Kṛṣṇa in His *vraja-līlā*, following after one of His associates, then one becomes qualified for *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Otherwise, if one remains on the path of *vaidhī-bhakti*, one must follow the rules and regulations until attaining *bhāva*.

Rūpa Gosvāmī and his commentators explain this with indisputable clarity:

Those qualified for *vaidhī-bhakti* are dependent on the rules of scripture and favorable use of logic until the appearance of *bhāva-bhakti*. BRS, 1.2.293

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

Because of following after the *rāgātmikās*, those practicing *rāgānugā-bhakti* practice *bhakti* with no limitations. That means that there is no specific rule concerning the time at which they will give up dependence on the rules of scripture. Is there a limit to how long those practicing *vaidhī-bhakti* should depend on the rules? This verse answers. *Bhāva* here means *rati* or the stage of *bhāva-bhakti* after *sādhana-bhakti*.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

In performing *sādhana-bhakti*, the *vaidhī-bhakti* practitioner will depend on scriptural injunctions and favorable use of logic until the appearance of *rati* (*bhāva*). After the appearance of *rati*, he no longer depends on these things.

However, as soon as the greed manifests in a person (for attaining a *bhāva* similar to that of the *vraja-vāsīs*), and he develops an inclination for *rāga-bhakti*, the practitioner of *rāgānugā-bhakti* does not depend any longer on scriptural rules and logic. Thus, it is greatly superior.

However, wherever that greed has appeared, it is understood that the person must have studied the scriptures in order to attain that greed. It is also necessary to study the scriptures in order to understand the proper *sādhana* for *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

Although *rāgānugā-sādhakas* are externally engaged in activities of *sādhana* that are similar to *vaidhī-sādhakas*, they are not thinking or acting the same way internally – their *bhajana* is very different. *Rāgānugā-sādhakas* only accept those *aṅgas* of *vaidhī* that are compatible with their desired *rasa* and *bhāvas*, and all others are ignored, and there is no flaw or fault for doing so. They are not obligated by any mandate to follow every single *aṅga* of *vaidhī-bhakti*.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains this in *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*:

Just as in *vaidhī-bhakti* the rules of *naitika dharma* mature and change shape, so also in *rāgānugā-bhakti* the rules of *vaidhī-bhakti* change slightly in emotional content and display some independent qualities. In some circumstances the rules change slightly, and in other cases, they transform entirely. This will be apparent from observing the conduct of the devotee. These changes do not arise from scripture, but according to the taste of the individual, and thus, examples are hard to give. Examples can only be given for *vaidhī-bhakti*. CS, Chapter 4, Page 77

Viśvanātha Cakravartī elaborates on this point in *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*:

All other limbs of devotional practice are attained through the practice of hearing and chanting. Without hearing and chanting one's following in the footsteps of the people of

Vraja will remain fruitless. This was said by the learned sages after elaborate consideration. **One should only practice those limbs that are favorable to one's own devotional mood and not those that are opposed to it.** RVC, 1.11

There are also specific internal processes (*bhajana*) that the *rāgānugā-sādhaka* engages in, and those will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Rūpa Gosvāmī mentions no similar or alternative internal processes for *vaidhī-sādhana*. Neither do the other *ācāryas*.

The motivations for *vaidhī-bhakti* are primarily based on strictly and diligently following the scriptural injunctions, and thus, one feels that he or she is being a “staunch devotee.” This often includes being very attached to the external performance of *sādhana* and an innate fear of not following them. There often tends to be more focus on the rules and regulations than on the goal, usually due to an understanding that if one follows the rules diligently, one will be rewarded by Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Sometimes there is a mentality of more is better, or quantity of *sādhana* versus quality.

The motivation for *rāgānugā-bhakti* is quite simply a strong attraction and desire to join Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* as an eternal participant, in one of the four primary relationships. In the beginning, the attraction and desire are not so strong, mature, or refined, due to lack of knowledge and depth of realization regarding Kṛṣṇa and all related confidential details. As one's knowledge, understanding and realizations expand over time, one's desires and attraction will also intensify accordingly, providing the necessary impetus for making steady progress.

When one is blessed with spiritual greed (*lobha*) by Kṛṣṇa or an advanced *rasika* Vaiṣṇava, one's progress will accelerate exponentially, as this intense desire or longing is the primary propelling force that immerses one deeper into hearing, chanting and especially remembering.

There is, however, an interim stage as well. If a devotee does not have the mindset of a *vaidhī-bhakta*, and has a basic natural attraction to Kṛṣṇa, but has not yet been blessed with spiritual greed, he or she can still engage in the external *sādhana* of *vaidhī-bhakti*, and continue to cultivate the growing attraction to Kṛṣṇa, while praying to be blessed with the benediction of spiritual greed.

Jīva Gosvāmī explains this in *Bhakti-sandarbhā*:

The path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* is honored simply by feeling special regard for the *rāgātmikā* associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Yet, a person in whom such *ruci* as defined above has not yet sprouted (*ajāta-ruci*) should still execute *rāgānugā-bhakti* combined with the practices of *vaidhī-bhakti*.

Those who have acquired this *ruci* (*jāta-ruci*) and are respected within a larger social framework should also execute *rāgānugā* mixed with *vaidhī* in order to set an ideal for others. In this mixture, *vaidhī* should be performed as far as possible so that it becomes one in nature with *rāgānugā*. BS, *Anuccheda* 312

All of the statements we've heard so far are crystal clear in their intended meanings. As such, any confusion that may have existed regarding the differences between *vaidhī-bhakti* and



*rāgānugā-bhakti* should now be easily resolved. I'll end this section with a passage from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Jaiva-dharma*, summarizing the glories of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, followed by an eye-opening perspective from Jīva Gosvāmī about the power of absorption in Kṛṣṇa:

Vrajanātha: Please explain the glories of *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

Bābājī: *Rāgānugā-bhakti* very quickly bestows that fruit which one cannot obtain even by observing the aṅgas of *vaidhī-bhakti* with firm faith (*niṣṭhā*) for a long time. Devotion on the *vaidhī-mārga* is weak, because it depends on rules and regulations; whereas *rāgānugā-bhakti* is naturally strong, because it is completely independent.

When one adopts the spiritual conception of following in the footsteps of a loving resident of Vraja, *rāga* is awakened, which always involves following the process of *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, *smaraṇam*, *pāda-sevanam*, *arcanam*, *vandanam* and *ātmanivedanam*. Ruci for following in the footsteps of the *vraja-vāsīs* is only awakened in those whose hearts are *nirguṇa* (beyond material attributes). This is why the greed for *rāgānugā-bhakti* is supremely rare and the root of supreme auspiciousness. JD, Chapter 21, Pages 505-506

From Jīva Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-sandarbha*:

Absorption even through enmity surpasses *vaidhī*:

Thus, the result of all these [being absorbed in different unfavorable moods mentioned previously] is absorption in the Lord. This being the case, even *vaidhī-bhakti* is not as effective as enmity – which is otherwise reprehensible – when applied on the path of spontaneous affection, to quickly bring about the state of absorption in the Lord. This is stated by Śrī Nārada:

The absorption in the Lord that a mortal being can reach through unobstructed enmity cannot be attained by *bhakti-yoga*. This is my definite opinion. SB, 7.1.26

The compound *vairanubandhena*, “through enmity,” also implies, “through fear.” The absorption in the Lord that one can achieve through feelings such as enmity and fear cannot be attained as quickly merely by carrying out the injunctions of devotion out of a sense of duty (*vaidhī-bhakti*). BS, *Anuccheda* 318

### ***Rāgānugā-bhakti* – one size does not fit all**

As mentioned in the **Introduction**, when explaining various aspects of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, there is always the risk of becoming overwhelmed with Sanskrit terms. This is one area where that could easily happen. There are a few key terms in this section that are worth knowing, because they appear repeatedly in the *ācāryas'* books, so familiarity with them will make further studies easier to comprehend.

It is obviously very important to understand this topic, but I felt it was not necessary to cover all of the complex details that are presented by the *ācāryas*, as those details don't directly contribute to the primary subject of our discussions, and there is the possibility of readers being overwhelmed with interesting but not directly relevant details, what to speak of many long compound Sanskrit words.

*Rāgānugā-bhakti* facilitates entry into the four main Vraja *rasas*, namely, *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya*. Most of the *ācāryas* mention that *śānta-rasa* is not a position Vaiṣṇavas generally aspire for, and thus, it is rarely included in their discussions about entering *vraja-līlā*. Before we hear from the *ācāryas*, I'll first summarize what will be covered in this section to help comprehend better what the *ācāryas* have presented.

To enter *dāsyā*, *sakhya* and *vātsalya* one practices *sambhandanuga-bhakti*. *Sambandha* in this connection implies relationships that have different limitations on the levels of intimacy expressed within them. Intimacy here refers to various types of personal contact and interaction, not necessarily levels or depth of love (*prema*), although, that is another factor to consider. *Anuga* means, "following", so this type of *bhakti* is following the *rāgātmikā* moods and behaviors of those *vraja-vāsīs* who are in *dāsyā*, *sakhya* and *vātsalya rasas*.

Then there is *mādhurya-rasa*, which of course is also a relationship, but because it manifests many more features, it is considered to be in its own class. Within *mādhurya-rasa* there are also two categories: having a direct conjugal relationship with Kṛṣṇa independently, or being part of Rādhā's group and having a relationship with Kṛṣṇa within the sphere of Rādhā's primary relationship with Him. This includes having a direct relationship with Rādhā and one of Her principal *sakhīs*, i.e. one's chosen mentor. That means there are three primary relationships in *mādhurya-rasa*, versus two in all other *rasas*.

Following the *rāgātmikā gopīs* in *mādhurya-rasa* is called *kāmānugā-bhakti*, *kāma* implying lust (not material lust) or conjugal desires, as manifest by the *gopīs*. Desiring a direct independent relationship of this type is called *sambhogeccā-mayī-bhakti* and desiring to be part of Rādhā's group is called *tat-tad-bhāvecchātmika-bhakti*. Most Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas tend to follow the path of *tat-tad-bhāvecchātmika-bhakti* to be part of Rādhā's group, by following one of Her eight principal *sakhīs*, and joining her group.

Readers are encouraged to acquire *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (Bhanu Swami's translation) with the commentaries of Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī, for a more in-depth study. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura also discusses these categories of *bhakti* in *Jaiva-dharma*, as part of his summary study of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* therein. Please refer to the Bibliography for more information on the books I used.

Now we'll hear excerpts from Rūpa Gosvāmī's presentation of this subject in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, along with selected commentaries from Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī.

There are two types of *rāgātmikā-bhakti* (i.e., the *bhakti* of the *vraja-vāsīs*): that impelled by conjugal feelings (*kāma-rūpa*) and that impelled by other relationships (*sambandha-rūpa*).  
BRS, 1.2.273

Here is the definition of *kāma-rūpā-bhakti*:

That type of *bhakti* with full absorption in the beloved is called *kāma-rūpā-bhakti*, which produces an intrinsic thirst for a conjugal relationship with the Lord in the *ātmā*. It is called *bhakti* because in that condition there is only eagerness for giving pleasure to the Lord. BRS, 1.2.283

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Kāma* should be described as a particular type of *prema* with full spontaneous absorption in the beloved object. This has already been mentioned in the definition of *rāgātmikā-bhakti*. That which is famous as *prema* is called *kāma-rūpā* in this verse. Other varieties are excluded. The verse covers only the characteristics of *kāma-rūpā*.

What is its effect? The thirst for conjugal enjoyment famous as *kāma* or lust is actually a thirst composed of *prema* alone, with no trace of material lust, and this thirst becomes one's essential nature. The verse then explains the reason that this *kāma* is equated with *prema* – because in this thirst for enjoyment, there is complete eagerness of the *gopīs* of Vraja only for pleasing Kṛṣṇa, and not a thirst for their personal enjoyment.

Next *sambandha-rūpā-rāgātmikā-bhakti* will be discussed:

*Sambandha-rūpā-rāgātmikā-bhakti* is that *bhakti* inspired by great absorption arising from identifying oneself as the parent, friend or servant of Govinda. This refers to the *bhakti* of the cowherd people, which is indicated by the word, *sambhandhād vṛṣṇayah*, quoted in verse 275 as an example of *sambandha*. This is because these other relationships in Vraja also have a predominance of intense affection (*rāga*), caused by a lack of awareness of Kṛṣṇa as God. BRS, 1.2.288

From these two types of *rāgātmikā-bhakti* (*siddha-bhakti*), two types of *rāgānugā-bhakti* (*sādhana-bhakti*), called *kāmānugā-bhakti* and *sambandhānugā-bhakti*, are derived. BRS, 1.2.290

The elements of *kāmānugā* will now be described:

That *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhakti* which is filled with longing and which follows after the *kāma-rūpā-rāgātmikā-bhakti* of the *siddha-bhaktas* (*vraja-vāsīs*), is called *kāmānugā-bhakti*. There are two types: *sambhogecchā-mayī* and *tat-tad-bhāvecchātma*. UN, 1.2.297-298

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Sambhogecchā-mayī* means *bhakti* consisting of the two types of activities (mental and physical), inspired by the desire for a direct experience of giving conjugal enjoyment to Kṛṣṇa independently, like a leader of a group of *gopīs*. An example of a leader of a group, according to scriptures is Candrāvalī.

*Tat-tad-bhāvecchātmika* means *bhakti* whose inspiration is the desire to taste the special *bhāva* in relation to Kṛṣṇa possessed by a particular woman of Vraja, whom one holds dear. This should be understood to be superior to the previous type. It is the chief type of *kāmānugā-bhakti*. In this verse, *sambhogah* means conjugal union, and *keli* means the same thing. Action whose goal is *keli* with Kṛṣṇa is called *sambhogeccā-mayī-kāmānugā-bhakti*. That *bhakti* which has the desire to taste the sweetness of the *gopīs*' love in relation to Kṛṣṇa is called *tat-tad-bhāvecchātmika-bhakti*.

Those who develop longing for the *bhāva* of the *gopīs* after seeing the sweetness in the Deity of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, or after hearing about His pastimes with the *gopīs*, are qualified for *sādhana* of either of these types of *kāmānugā-bhakti*. In the *Padma Purāṇa*, it is said that even men can attain this *bhakti*. BRS, 1.2.300

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

...Without hearing, there will be no manifestation of [Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*'] basic forms and pastimes. Hearing about Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, even without seeing, is also effective. These persons develop longing (*laulyam*) for the *bhāva* of the *gopīs*, and thus, become qualified for these two types of *sādhana*.

*Sambandhānugā-bhakti* is defined as follows:

The devotees define *sambandhānugā-bhakti* as that *bhakti* in which there is a constant contemplation of oneself as a parent, friend or servant of Kṛṣṇa, and identification with the role. Practicing devotees greedy for parental, friendly or servant relationships perform this *bhakti* with identifications of the behavior and mood of Nanda (parent), Subala (friend), and others. BRS, 1.2.305-306

This, then, is the heart of the knowledge to understand on this particular sub-topic, specifically for the purposes of this book. Not to belabor the point, but it should be noted and emphasized that none of the *ācāryas* have mentioned anything whatsoever about being freed from all *anarthas* or material desires, or being advanced or any other such qualifications. Intense desire and longing at the level of greed are emphasized repeatedly as the sole qualifications.

There is one other thing that should be discussed or I will be criticized by many for the fault of omission, and that is, *bhāvollāsa-rati*. According to many Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, *bhāvollāsa-rati* is specifically the *rati* or *bhāva* of the *mañjarīs*, the *nitya-sakhīs* of Rādhā. It is said to be a special type of *bhāva* unique to the *mañjarīs*, because they are *asama-snehā-sakhīs* – *sakhīs* of Rādhā who have slightly more love for Rādhā than for Kṛṣṇa. Other *sakhīs* of Rādhā have equal love for Her and Kṛṣṇa – *sama-snehā-sakhīs*. These details will also be discussed later.

For now, let's read the verse and commentary from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, which, interestingly, comes as an addendum at the end of a major section, and not where we might expect to find it. Other than this verse, there are no other discussions about *bhāvollāsa-rati* in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* or in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Jaiva-dharma*, but there is one verse in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, where Viśvanātha Cakravartī makes a comment about it, and it follows this reference.

Addenda:

If the *rati* of the associates of Rādhā directed to Rādhā is equal or less than their *rati* directed to Kṛṣṇa, the *rati* directed to Rādhā is called *sañcārī-rati*, nourishing the *rati* towards Kṛṣṇa. If the *rati* of Rādhā's associates directed to Rādhā is greater than that directed to Kṛṣṇa, and is constantly increasing, though it is still a *sañcārī-bhāva*, it is called *bhāvollāsa-rati*. BRS, 2.5.128

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

*Api ca* indicates that the chapter is finished, but now some additional information will be given. The meaning of the verse is as follows. *Suḥṛd-ratiḥ* (*rati* directed to one's friends) indicates, for instance, the *rati* of principal associates of Rādhā such as Lalitā, who have similar emotional sentiments as Rādhā, directed to that particular devotee who is the shelter of one's cherished *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa, in this case Rādhā.

If that *rati* directed to Rādhā or another ideal devotee is equal or less than their *rati* directed to Kṛṣṇa, that *rati* directed to Rādhā is called a *sañcārī-bhāva* (assistant) of the *rati* directed to Kṛṣṇa. If that *rati* directed to Rādhā is greater than the person's *rati* directed to Kṛṣṇa, constantly increasing with affection, it is called *bhāvollāsa* to indicate its special nature, though that *rati* directed to Rādhā is still a *sañcārī-bhāva*.

This statement has been written here as it is remembered at this point, though it should be included at the end of the topic of *sañcārī-bhāvas* or *vyabhicārī-bhāvas*, because it belongs to the same topic.

From *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*:

Affection for her *sakhīs*:

Even though the hairs of Her body were standing on end as She enjoyed pastimes with Kṛṣṇa on the summit of Govardhana, Rādhā affectionately wiped Lalitā's face, decorated with beautiful hanging locks of hair. UN, 13.104

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

The affection of the leader for her *sakhīs* is a *vyabhicārī-bhāva*. It is said:

[here, Śrī Viśvanātha quotes the above verse from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*]

This is the meaning. If the *rati* directed to a friend is equal or less than that directed to Kṛṣṇa it is a *sañcārī-bhāva*. That affection for the friend nourishes the *rati* for Kṛṣṇa. If that affection for the friend is greater than for Kṛṣṇa and is nourished by affection for Him, it is called *bhāvollāsa*. It is not a *sañcārī-bhāva* or a *sthāyī-bhāva*. Rūpa-maṅjarī speaks to a *sakhī* of Lalitā. Rādhā wiped the perspiration from the face of Lalitā. Rādhā has *rati* for Lalitā. This is a *sañcārī-bhāva*, nourishing Her *rati* for Kṛṣṇa.

According to those who promote *mañjarī-bhāva* as the highest goal of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, *bhāvollāsa-rati* is the *sthāyī-bhāva* of the *mañjarīs*. *Sthāyī-bhāva* is one's permanent and dominant loving mood in *vraja-līlā*, one's core emotional and loving attitude. However, Viśvanātha Cakravartī clearly states that *bhāvollāsa-rati* is not a *sthāyī-bhāva*, "It is not a *sañcārī-bhāva* or a *sthāyī-bhāva*." And Jīva Gosvāmī states that it is a *sañcārī-bhāva* and does not mention anything about it being a *sthāyī-bhāva*. That is the final conclusion of the authorities on this matter.

I have presented this information regarding *bhāvollāsa-rati* for clarification in the matter. It is a topic of much discussion and debate among Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, and, as such, I wanted to provide readers with the sources of this information, so they can readily draw their own conclusions. Unlike the presentations of many other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava authors, I do not specifically promote *mañjarī-bhāva* as a preference in this book. One's *rasa* is based solely on one's desires and natural attractions, as we will learn in Chapter 5.

### **Rāgānugā-sādhana and bhajana – the guiding principles**

In this section I'll review the fundamental guiding principles of *sādhana* and *bhajana* in *rāgānugā-bhakti*. The specific details of the internal processes of *rāgānugā-bhajana* as it relates to the gradual realization of one's eternal identity will be discussed and analyzed thoroughly in Chapter 5.

Let's begin this section with a succinct summary of the process of *rāgānugā-bhakti* by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura from *Jaiva-dharma*:

Vrajanātha: What is the process of *rāgānugā-bhakti*?

Bābāji: The *sādhaka* who has developed greed towards the beautiful service mood (*sevā*) of a particular *vraja-vāsī* always remembers and meditates on his *sevā* to that personality. He is absorbed in the mutual pastimes of his beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa with that *vraja-vāsī*, and he constantly resides in Vraja, either physically or within the mind, having a greed to obtain his or her *bhāva*.

He follows that *vraja-vāsī's* example, and always renders *sevā* in two ways: Externally, he serves as a practicing *sādhaka*; and internally he renders *sevā* with the *bhāvas* of his *siddha-deha*. This is the process of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. JD, Chapter 21, Page 505

This analysis of *rāgānugā-sādhana* and *bhajana* is done in the context of the above understanding. In other words, *rāgānugā-sādhana* and *bhajana* is designed to facilitate one's remembrance and focus on the above stated reality, which ultimately becomes one's eternal life as will be clearly seen.

A thorough review of the *ācāryas'* books used for this study reveals that *rāgānugā-sādhakas* tend to focus primarily on *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, *smaraṇam* and *arcanam*. In this section I'll explore those particular *aṅgas* as applied to *rāgānugā-sādhana* and *bhajana*.

In a previous section, *Vaidhī-bhakti* and *rāgānugā-bhakti*, we heard from Viśvanātha Cakravartī in his commentary on *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.2.293:

However, as soon as the greed manifests in a person (for attaining a *bhāva* similar to that of the *vraja-vāsīs*), and he develops an inclination for *rāga-bhakti*, the practitioner of *rāgānugā-bhakti* does not depend any longer on scriptural rules and logic. Thus, it is greatly superior [to *vaidhī-bhakti*].

However, wherever that greed has appeared, it is understood that the person must have studied the scriptures in order to attain that greed. It is also necessary to study the scriptures in order to understand the proper *sādhana* for *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

If *rāgānugā-sādhakas* are not bound by strict rules and regulations, but still have to study the *śāstras*, what methodology do they use to determine which *aṅgas* of *sādhana* to follow, and how exactly do they incorporate them? Viśvanātha Cakravartī provides us with the full details in *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*:

The scriptures show five kinds of devotional practices to make it clear which limbs of *bhakti* are to be practiced in *rāgānugā-bhakti*, what they are like, what is their actual nature, what is to be done and what is not to be done.

They are those which are:

- (1) filled with one's desired mood (*bhāva*)
- (2) related to one's desired mood
- (3) favorable to one's desired mood
- (4) not opposed to one's desired mood
- (5) opposed to one's desired mood

Of them, some are both the practice (*sādhana*) and the goal (*sādhya*) (the only difference being that the former are in an unripe state, and the latter are ripe), some are the direct cause of attaining the goal (*prema*), some are the indirect cause, some are helpful, some are harmful, and some are neutral. All these divisions have been shown. RVC, 1.13

All other limbs of devotional practice are attained through the practice of hearing and chanting. Without hearing and chanting one's following in the footsteps of the people of Vraja will remain fruitless. This was said by the learned sages after elaborate consideration. **One should only practice those limbs that are favorable to one's own devotional mood and not those that are opposed to it.** RVC, 1.11

The guiding principles given above are the primary filters which *rāgānugā-sādhakas* apply to personalize and customize their *sādhana* and *bhajan* to achieve their desired goals. The application of these five principles is dynamic and unique to each devotee according to his or her individual nature and specific stage of advancement. We should arrange our *sādhana* and *bhajan* to suit our own personal tastes and desires in relation to loving and serving Kṛṣṇa in *vraja-līlā*.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Bhajana-rahasya* is an excellent example of personalized *rāgānuga-sādhana-bhajana*, and in *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī also gives more examples of those five kinds of practices for further clarification. It is written that each of the Six Gosvāmīs had their own unique *sādhana* and *bhajana*, and they were all very close associates. They even had their own personal Deities and temples within walking distance of each other.

In *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, Sanātana Gosvāmī, discusses refining your *sādhana* according to your natural tendencies and personal tastes:

Whatever the devotional method by which a man with true spiritual taste feels satisfaction and complete joy, that is the method saintly authorities deem most excellent and effective for him. It is not only the best of methods but the very aim of his endeavor. BB, 2.3.152

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

How should we regard the meditation (*dhyāna*) in which a Vaiṣṇava does not experience the sensory functions of *saṅkīrtana*, touching the Lord, and so on, but merely contemplates the Lord's form? That style of devotional service should also be accepted as perfect for the devotee who derives pleasure from it.

When a devotee feels eager attraction to any of the nine kinds of service, that devotional method becomes the means for him to quickly fulfill all his desires. Moreover, his practice will gradually evolve into *prema*, the final goal of devotional life.

As we read before, once you have developed a spontaneous attraction and intense desire for your chosen *rasa* in *vraja-līlā*, you will be naturally inclined to refine your *sādhana* and *bhajan* to be fully compatible with that desired *rasa* and all of its associated moods and pastimes.

In his monthly publication, *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrika*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gives Sanātana Gosvāmī's conclusion to *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* about the focused *sādhana* and *bhajana* of *rāgānugā-sādhakas*:

Therefore, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī has concluded his book *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* by presenting the following statements for one-pointed devotees:

*Ekantika bhaktas* (one-pointed devotees) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa consider *śrī kṛṣṇa-smaraṇa* and *śrī kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* alone to be the most fulfilling and valued activities. Generally, they do not engage in any other *aṅgas* of *bhakti* besides these two, which they cultivate with great love and affection. Their eagerness for these *aṅgas* is so strong that no other activity can captivate their taste.

They develop an intense desire to serve the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a specific mood. Therefore, they render service to the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with moods which are favorable to their own *rasa*, along with some independence (to give up the injunctions which are unfavorable to their cultivation).



This alone is their *vidhi*. The *ekantika bhaktas* are not bound to follow all the rules and regulations which have been prescribed by the *rsis*. The moods of the *ekantika bhakta's* inborn, natural disposition generally remain prominent. This is their glory. SGP, Year 2, Issue 4

In *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Rūpa Gosvāmī states that either one or many *aṅgas* may be performed to reach the goal:

*Bhakti*, taking shelter of one principal *aṅga* or many *aṅgas*, according to one's desire, and practiced with steadiness (*niṣṭhā*), brings about the desired result (*bhāva and prema*). BRS, 1.2.264

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

That *bhakti* in which one *aṅga* is performed as the principal one among hearing, chanting and other *aṅgas*, while other *aṅgas* become secondary, or that *bhakti* in which many *aṅgas* are performed, leads to perfection. The choice of one or many *aṅgas* is according to one's preference.

We'll now look at the differences between *sādhana* and *bhajana*. *Bhajana* is what goes on internally while one is engaged in the external activities of *sādhana*. Sometimes *bhajana* is completely internal, as with certain types of *smaraṇam*. *Bhajana* is based on your collective spiritual desires related to serving Kṛṣṇa in His eternal *līlā*. As such, although the external activities of hearing and chanting are the same for *vaidhī-bhaktas* and *rāgānugā-bhaktas*, they are very different internally per their individual *bhajana*.

During his final years of *bhajana*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura wrote *Bhajana-rahasya*, wherein he revealed the details of his personal *bhajana*, something not normally advised by the *ācāryas*. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura mentions this in *Prema-bhakti-candrikā*:

In the matter of discussing topics pertaining to one's personal *bhajana*, it is best to not speak such words here and there. In this regard be careful! The reason is that someone may become angry, while others may only find fault. So simply offer your *pranāmas* to the feet of all Vaiṣṇavas. PBC, 119

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's unexpected generosity has provided devotees with a template for *bhajana* that can be used as a guide to develop their own individual *bhajana*. It is interesting to note that, although in *Jaiva-dharma* Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura presented many details from Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī's *bhajan* manual, *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*, in keeping with the principle that one's *rāgānugā-bhajana* is unique and personalized, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda developed his own *bhajana* program rather than simply following someone else's.

In the Introduction to *Bhajana-rahasya*, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī gives a very insightful and revealing explanation of the meaning of *bhajana*:

Śrī *Bhajana-rahasya* is compiled by Śrīmad Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura Mahāśaya. He has collected into the form of a book, several confidential hints from his own method of *bhajana*

to guide sincere *sādhakas* who are performing *bhajana* under his direction. Some years ago, this destitute person observed him performing *bhajana*. He was constantly reciting and relishing verses such as the ones in this book, thus becoming overwhelmed with *bhagavat-prema*.

For *sādhakas* whose faith is on the neophyte platform, the system of *arcana* is provided. Many people are unable to understand the distinction between *arcana* and *bhajana* and therefore use the word *bhajana* to refer to *arcana*. One can practice *bhajana* by performing the nine kinds of devotion, *navadhā-bhakti* (*śravaṇam, kīrtanam...*).

Because *arcana* is included within *navadhā-bhakti*, it is also considered a part of *bhajana*. There is a difference between complete *bhajana* and partial *bhajana*. *Arcana* means to worship the deity with awe and reverence; that is, with knowledge of the Lord's opulence and by observing etiquette. It is also *arcana* to serve Bhagavān with various paraphernalia according to rules and regulations and with the mundane conception of identifying oneself with the material body.

In *viśrambha-sevā*, service rendered with intimacy and a sense of possessiveness, the hot rays of awe and reverence are still apparent to a small degree, but no one can refuse the excellent sweetness of its cool, pleasant moonbeams. A brief *arcana-paddhati* has been added as an appendix to this book.

Within the framework of this book, the secret meaning of *bhajana* is given in a way that captivates the heart. In the process of *arcana*, one remains more or less entangled in one's relationship with the gross and subtle body. In the realm of *bhajana*, however, the *sādhaka* passes beyond both the gross and subtle bodies to directly serve Bhagavān.

Although the goal of all *rāgānugā-sādhakas* is an eternal *rasa* in *vraja-līlā*, not all *rāgānugā-sādhakas* attain the same result. Each individual's desires expressed through their *sādhana* and *bhajana* are unique, and lead to varied results, as explained by Sanātana Gosvāmī in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

The disciplines by which devotees in practice can reach Śrī Goloka – those very same disciplines let them see the Lord performing pastimes like those of Gokula, completely satisfied, in *vraja-bhūmi* in the mortal world. BB, 2.5.172

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

To search out the Lord in Gokula, Gopa-kumāra need not go down to the earth, but he does need to learn the *sādhana*, the special practices, for attaining Kṛṣṇa's personal abode. For intimate associates like Nanda Mahārāja no spiritual practice is needed, because they are eternal *vraja-vāsīs*. But for everyone else, careful endeavor is required.

On this path, not everyone attains the same level of success. A devotee may develop *bhakti* to the point of being able to see Kṛṣṇa but may not be able to see Him busily enjoying the special pastimes of Vṛndāvana with His intimate devotees.

When more advanced, a Vaiṣṇava may occasionally see Kṛṣṇa engaging in His Vṛndāvana pastimes but not displaying the full scope of His blissful enjoyment. And even such a Vaiṣṇava may not be fortunate enough to enter Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes and play with Kṛṣṇa in absolute freedom. The highest perfection of *bhakti* is rarely achieved.

Now let's look at another key aspect of *rāgānugā-sādhana* and *bhajana*. Jīva Gosvāmī explains the predominantly internal nature of *rāgānugā-bhakti* in *Bhakti-sandarbha*:

The manner of conducting oneself in *rāgānugā-bhakti* is as described by Pingala:

Having full faith in the Lord and being content to live with whatever comes naturally, I shall enjoy with Him, my husband and my very Self. SB, 11.8.40

The pronoun *amunā*, “with Him,” is used for a person or object that is far away. This indicates an intention to enjoy with the lover who is present in consciousness, not personally present. *Atmanā*, “through the mind,” used adverbially, qualifies the verb *viharāmi*, and thus, specifies that the manner of enjoyment is internal.

The verse is to be understood in this way because **on the path *rāgānugā*, which is inspired by taste, internal worship through the function of mind plays a prominent role.** Furthermore, Pingala had not yet attained a spiritual form as a sweetheart of the Lord, in which case it is generally appropriate to perform such service only through the mind. BS, *Anuccheda* 311

In *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains this as well in discussing the meaning of the following verse from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

Remembering the Vṛndāvana form of Kṛṣṇa and His dear associates who have inclinations for service similar to one's own, absorbing oneself in hearing topics related to them, one should always live in Vraja. BRS, 1.2.294

First of all, through the words, “remembering Kṛṣṇa,” it is indicated that remembrance (*smaraṇam*) is the main item of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. *Rāga* is a special feature of the mind. RVC, 1.11

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu descended to promote *saṅkīrtana* as *the* preeminent spiritual process for this age of *Kali* – congregational chanting of the Holy Names of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, many devotees say that chanting (*kīrtanam*) is most important and more so than *smaraṇam*. In the beginning stages of one's devotional life this is certainly the case. However, Sanātana Gosvāmī explains in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* that there is in fact a very special interconnected relationship between *kīrtanam* and *smaraṇam*:

By *saṅkīrtana* the joy of meditation grows, and by meditation the sweet joy of *saṅkīrtana* grows. In our own experience, the two methods fortify one another and are therefore actually one. BB, 2.3.153

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

The Vaikuṅṭha messengers' own opinion is that both meditation and *saṅkīrtana* are advantageous. The two methods support one another, and because one or the other may be more suitable in different times, places, and circumstances, their mutual dependence should not be a cause of confusion. **Either may be done separately, but neither, in the end, is complete without the other.** Regardless of which serves as the cause and which the effect, **the two are essentially non different.**

Here is more insightful information regarding *smaraṇam* from *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

If by the force of one's meditation all the functions of the senses – including *saṅkīrtana* of the Lord, physical contact with Him, seeing Him, and so on – become absorbed into the function of the mind, that meditation may be accepted as better than chanting out loud. BB, 2.3.151

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

If a devotee becomes so proficient in *dhyāna* (meditation on the Lord) that the devotional practices he earlier performed with his speech, touch, eyes, and other senses become spontaneous activities of his mind, then of course for that devotee meditation has become the most suitable practice. He can inwardly continue his *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, and so on, with or without the participation of his external senses.

The *smaraṇam* being discussed in this section refers to meditating on Kṛṣṇa's names, forms, qualities and pastimes that are directly related to one's specific desires for participation in His eternal *līlā*. The impetus for remembering these things related to Kṛṣṇa is nourished by continuously hearing about His *līlās*, as was discussed in, **The *līlā* books** (Chapter 2).

I will examine the five progressive stages of *smaraṇam* later, when I discuss *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā-smaraṇam* – meditating on Kṛṣṇa's pastimes throughout the eight periods of the day and night. In this conjunction, it's worth repeating this verse and commentary from *Prema-bhakti-candrikā*:

Remembrance of the Lord's pastimes is the life and soul of the devotee. Remembering the sweet loving pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is the essence of all the processes. This is the goal of life, as well as the best means of achieving the goal. PBC, 61

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

This is the essence of all instructions regarding rules and regulations. The remembrance of the pastimes of the Lord is the only process for achieving the goal of one's life, relishing the transcendental [*rasas*] of the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. There is no higher goal or process than this. The remembrance of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is the essence of all instructions given in the scriptures.

The final point for discussion in this section is *arcanam* – worshipping and serving the Deity. In the first section of this chapter, *Sādhana-bhakti* – the primary elements and the eight steps to

*prema*, I summarized the principal components of *sādhana-bhakti*. Of the last five most important items, the first one was: having faith and great affection for serving the Deity.

As mentioned by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī in his introduction to *Bhajana-rahasya*, there are different levels of *arcanam* according to one's stage of advancement. For *rāgānugā-sādhakas*, *arcanam* becomes a very intimate and confidential part of *bhajana*. Although not always the case, more often than not, *rāgānugā-sādhakas* install Deities in their homes specifically for such personalized direct worship and service.

This is especially recommended for householder Vaiṣṇavas, who normally have fixed residences, although these days it seems like most *sannyāsīs* also have fixed residences, so many of them also engage in *arcanam* with their personal Deities.

In the case of the Six Gosvāmīs, they established grand public temples for their Deities to help stimulate the revival of Vṛndāvana, which was part of the mission given to them by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In spite of the scope and grandeur of the worship in their temples, the Gosvāmīs worshiped their Deities in a very personal and intimate way. It is said that there are over 5,000 temples in Vṛndāvana, and the fact is that most of them are small temples in the homes of individual Vaiṣṇavas.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura comments on *arcana* in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*:

Those who have a decided preference for the path of Deity worship will attain the same perfection as from hearing and chanting. One who has single-minded affection for the Holy Name only engages in hearing, chanting and remembering. HC, 15.39-40

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's notes:

Exclusive devotees engage in practically nothing other than chanting the Holy Name and remembering Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Doing this with supreme love, they have no taste for any other activity. They may serve their beloved Deities according to their particular mood. They do so according to their desire using their personal *mantra* and they set their rules for this worship according to their personal taste.

This short overview of the basic principles of *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana* provides us with a solid foundational understanding, and prepares us for a deeper study of the most esoteric aspects.

### **Śruti smṛti purānādi – sādhakas or sahajiyās?**

There is a well known verse quoted in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* that was often cited by Śrīla Prabhupāda in conjunction with concocting one's own methods of engaging in *bhakti*, without reference and adherence to the various authoritative *śāstras*.

*śruti-smṛti-purānādi pāncarātriki vidhim vinā  
aikāntiki harer bhaktir utpātāyaiva kalpate*

Even one-pointed devotion to Lord Hari becomes a source of disturbance, if performed without adhering to the injunctions of the *śruti*, *smṛti*, *Purāṇas* or the *Pancaratra*. BRS, 1.2.101

As was stated earlier in this chapter, those who are on the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* do not strictly follow all of the rules and regulations of *śāstra* as the basis for their *sādhana* and *bhajana*. Many contemporary Vaiṣṇavas are therefore concerned that unqualified devotees will take up the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* simply because they won't have to "follow any rules or regulations," and thus, they will degrade themselves and *rāgānugā-bhakti* into something easy and cheap.

The facts are that people have been misunderstanding and misapplying spiritual principles since time immemorial, and it is a phenomenon that is a constant part of human nature and society. Even Advaita Ācārya had sons who deviated from the original tree of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and eventually became dead branches. And they were sons of the incarnation of Mahā Viṣṇu! *Bhakti* itself cannot be institutionalized or controlled by anyone. It is strictly a private affair between the devotee, the *guru*, and Kṛṣṇa,

Of equal concern on the other side are those Vaiṣṇavas who wrongly criticize qualified *rāgānugā-sādhakas* for being deviant, simply because they do not conform to someone's limited preconceived notions of *sādhana-bhakti*. Knowing what we have learned in this chapter, we can now understand that this is primarily due to lack of knowledge on the part of the critic.

Jīva Gosvāmī discusses this concern in *Bhakti-sandarbhā*. Here are some highlights from his discussion, after first quoting this specific verse. It's a long discussion, so for brevity, I have extracted some key points without altering the overall intent and substance of his presentation:

...Taking [the above verse and another similar verse] into consideration, how can one attain perfection through *rāgānugā-bhakti*, which is independent of any injunction? This is answered as follows. Because the Lord's names, virtues and other characteristics are naturally endowed with their own potencies, *bhakti* – unlike *dharma* – is not dependent on injunctions.

...The impelling ordinances of scripture are specifically intended for those who are not inclined naturally, and the order in which such procedures are meant to be carried out is also prescribed for them. Such people experience a great deal of confusion and mental agitation, and because of the absence of taste, they do not understand the nature of *rāgātmikā-bhakti*.

...The rules and regulations are not created for one who is naturally drawn to devotion, because by taste alone such a person will be absorbed in the specific manner of *rāgātmikā* devotion, which captivates the Lord.

...Because natural taste in devotion is extremely rare, if one considers themselves fixed in exclusive devotion yet is without even reverence for scriptural injunctions, their so-called fixity in devotion is merely a pretense. Hence, the criticism of exclusive devotion that does not adhere to the injunctions of scripture, as in the *śruti-smṛti purāṇa* verse cited earlier, is

directed towards those who have not developed a taste for devotion. Such criticism is inappropriate for a devotee who has acquired taste, as referred to in the verse quoted above (SB, 10.6.36)

...Consequently, it is the disrespect of scripture that is criticized here, not the ignorance of scripture, because ignorance of scripture has not been considered detrimental, as implied in SB, 11.2.35, quoted above. BS, *Anuccheda* 312

Therefore, when it is said that *rāgānugā-sādhakas* do not follow the rules and regulations of scripture, it means that they don't *depend* on scriptural rules as their primary motivation and guide to engage in *sādhana-bhakti*. It doesn't mean that they reject or disrespect the *śāstras*. *Rāgānugā-sādhakas* must still examine the *śāstras* to learn the details of *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*, as Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains:

Now, when both the above-mentioned kinds of devotees become inquisitive about how to attain the mood of Kṛṣṇa's eternal associates in Vraja, then we see that they are again dependent on information from the revealed scriptures and logical arguments. The way can only be shown through the rules set forth by the scriptures and their resultant logical arguments. There is no other way.

Just like when one is greedy for cow's milk, one must ask someone who knows about it how to get that milk, and one is dependent on that person's instructions. That person will say: "You should buy a cow", and will also instruct one how to bring the cow, how to feed it grass and how to milk it. One does not attain the required knowledge just like that, without being instructed. RVC, 1.7

Because *rāgānugā-bhakti* is motivated by a natural taste and spontaneous attraction for a specific relationship with Kṛṣṇa, it evolves in a unique way for each devotee. As we have learned from the *ācāryas*, each *sādhaka* customizes his or her *sādhana* and *bhajana* according to personal preferences and desires, by choosing *aṅgas* of *bhakti* that are compatible and inspirational to their desired goals, all of which should be within the guidelines described by the *ācāryas*.

This personal and customized approach is not at all based on concocting one's own methods, but rather, following various aspects of the examples set by the *ācāryas*, as well as those delineated in their writings. Thus, by those standards there is absolutely no deviation from *śāstra* or the *ācāryas*. The final conclusion of Jīva Gosvāmī is that the *śruti-smṛti-purānādi* verse does not apply to genuinely qualified *rāgānugā-sādhakas*.

## Chapter 4 – Removing impediments and establishing steady progress

### **Anartha-nivṛtti – conquering bhakti’s biggest challenges**

*Anartha-nivṛtti* is the fourth of the nine stages of progressive advancement in *bhakti*. But as we will see, the process of removing *anarthas* actually takes place gradually, beginning from *bhajana-kryia* to *niṣṭhā*, through *ruci*, *āśakti*, and even *bhāva*. It’s not that we finish *anartha-nivṛtti* and then we reach the stage of *niṣṭhā*, completely free from *anarthas* from that point on. It’s much more complicated than that. Removal of *anarthas* is on-going throughout all of the final stages of progress on the path of *bhakti* leading to *prema*.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura provides a succinct summary of this progressive diminishing of *anarthas* in his *Bhajana-rahasya*, and in the next section we will examine these details more thoroughly.

While chanting at the stage of *niṣṭhā*, *anarthas* are destroyed and one attains a taste for the holy name (*ruci*). Then, as more *anarthas* are destroyed, one comes to the stage of attachment (*āśakti*). Gradually as the stage of *bhāva*, or *rati*, is attained, almost all *anarthas* are destroyed. BR, 1.6 commentary

For many devotees it seems like an almost impossible task to free themselves of so many material desires and bad habits – some of which don’t seem to be all that bad. It is also where most devotees hit an impasse, repeatedly stumble, get discouraged and frustrated, and in too many cases, they give up hope and stop engaging in regular *sādhana-bhakti*.

*Anartha-nivṛtti* is a complex subject and one of the most misunderstood challenges for sincere practitioners. A proper understanding of these complexities will help one approach this endeavor with more clarity, confidence and enthusiasm. It’s not an “all or nothing” proposition. Nor can this undertaking be accomplished simply by brute force strength and sheer willpower. That approach will only result in repeated frustration and guaranteed failure.

We cannot beat down material desires by trying to “be detached” or simply, “just surrender”. These desires will always win sooner or later – they already have for an infinite number of births. We can certainly restrain ourselves to some extent in the exercise of responsible self-control, and we can gradually improve our capability for tolerating the urges of the senses, but continuous artificial restraint does not address the root of the problem. That is a completely backwards approach to the challenge.

As discussed previously, the *jīva* is by nature full of desires. Desires are a key component of the *jīva*’s inherent nature (*svarūpa*) exactly as they are with Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, detachment does not mean freedom from “all” desires, because that would be impossible. It means detachment from desires and activities that are unfavorable for progress on the path of *bhakti*.

Detachment and renunciation are two subjects that are the cause of much consternation among Vaiṣṇavas. Guilt and remorse haunt many devotees who feel defeated by the forces of material nature. They feel that detachment and renunciation are harsh and unnatural impositions on the



struggling mind and the heart, which are supposed to be filled with joy and love for Kṛṣṇa from the practice of *bhakti*.

Therefore, I will first examine what the *ācāryas* have said about detachment and renunciation, to resolve the misconceptions and conflicting, distorted teachings that are too often associated with these principles.

### **Sannyasa, renunciation and detachment**

Let's establish some axiomatic truths right up front:

*Sannyasa* is not one of the goals of *bhakti*.

*Sannyasa* is not a limb (*aṅga*) or an integral part of the process of *bhakti* – it does not cause *bhakti*.

*Sannyasa* is not a prerequisite for practicing *vaidhī-bhakti* or *rāgānuṅgā-bhakti*, nor for attaining *prema-bhakti*.

*Sannyasa* is not a transcendental state of consciousness.

*Sannyasa* is not advisable or appropriate for 99.99% of young men practicing *sādhana-bhakti*.

*Sannyasa* should not be accepted formally unless and until one is already at a steady advanced stage of detachment from material influences.

*Sannyasa* is simply a material status of life like *gṛhastha* or *vānapraṣṭha*, and it is accepted or rejected according to practical considerations along with an honest evaluation of one's material and spiritual circumstances and preferences in life.

*Sannyasa*, being a stage of material life, must also be “renounced” if such persons want to make spiritual progress, as attachment to any material identification represents an impediment to *bhakti*.

Detachment and renunciation are also not *aṅgas* of *bhakti* – they are by-products of *bhakti*, that manifest as a result of continuous *sādhana*. They are also not among the desired goals of *sādhana-bhakti*. The direct goal of *sādhana-bhakti* is attachment to Kṛṣṇa, not detachment from material existence. And, interestingly, detachment from material existence is not a prerequisite for becoming attached to Kṛṣṇa. Detachment appears automatically without great effort in direct proportion to one's growing attachment to Kṛṣṇa – not the other way around.

Here is a summary review of what the *ācāryas* have to say on this matter.

Rūpa Gosvāmī explains in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

*Jñāna* and *vairāgya* (renunciation) are suitable for entering *bhakti*, being somewhat useful in the beginning of *bhakti*, but they are not considered *aṅgas* of *bhakti*. BRS, 1.2.248

From Jīva Gosvāmī's Commentary:

*Vairāgya* in the verse means the type of renunciation that is useful only for *brahma-jñāna*. That part of *vairāgya*, which is contrary to *bhakti*, should also be rejected. ... *Jñāna* and *vairāgya* are somewhat useful only in the beginning of *bhakti*. That means they are suitable only at the stage of giving up attachment to other objects. When attachments have been given up and a person begins practicing *bhakti*, *jñāna* and *vairāgya* become insignificant. Also, after beginning *bhakti*, thinking of these processes will distract a person from *bhakti*.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes in *Caitanya-sikṣāmṛta*:

The renunciation arising from *bhakti* is the beauty of devotional life. To become renounced and then search out *bhakti* is unnatural and in most cases disastrous. Renunciation or detachment is the special ornament of the person who has attained *bhāva*. It is not an *aṅga* of *bhakti* but a symptom of *bhakti*. CS, Ch 5, Part 2

Should all the aspirants for *prema* leave family life and take *sannyāsa*? A person should accept whatever *āśrama* he judges as favorable for practice leading to *prema* – it may be *gṛhastha*, *vānapraṣṭha* or *sannyāsa āśrama*. If one *āśrama* is unfavorable he should give that up.

Examples of householders among Lord Caitanya's associates are Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, Pundarika Vidyānidhi, and Rāmānanda Rāya. At the same time they were natural *paramahamsas*. In more ancient times also, there are many examples of householders, such as Ṛbhu, who were *paramahamsas*.

However, Rāmānuja Ācārya, Svarūpa Damodāra Gosvāmī, Madhavendra Purī, Hari Dāsa Ṭhākura, Sanātana Gosvāmī and Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, finding *gṛhastha āśrama* unfavorable for chanting, gave it up and accepted *sannyāsa āśrama*. CS, Ch 6, Part 4

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura from *Jaiva-dharma*:

Vijaya: Please explain the meaning of *virakti* (detachment – one of the symptoms of *bhāva*).

Bābājī: *Virakti* is disinterest in sense gratification.

Vijaya: Can those who have taken *veśa* (renounced order, *sannyāsa veśa* or *bābājī veśa*) assert that they are detached?

Bābājī: *Veśa* is a matter of social etiquette. When *bhāva* appears within the heart, *ruci* for the spiritual world becomes very strong, and taste for the material world gradually diminishes. Finally, when *bhāva* fully manifests, taste for the mundane world becomes practically *nil* (*sunya-praya*). This is called detachment (*virakti*).

A detached Vaiṣṇava is one who has attained *virakti* and then takes *vaiṣṇava-veśa* to diminish his necessities. However, the *śāstras* do not sanction taking *veśa* prior to the

appearance of *bhāva*; that is not real *veśa* at all. Śrīmān Mahāprabhu taught this lesson to the whole world when he punished Chota Haridāsa. JD, Ch 22, Page 528

Yādava dāsa: These days, young men often renounce household life and adopt the dress of the renounced order. They establish a place for *sādhus* to congregate, and begin to worship the Deity of the Lord. After some time, they fall into association with women again, but do not give up chanting *hari-nāma*. They maintain their hermitage by collecting alms from many places. Are such men *tyāgīs* or *grhastha-bhaktas*?

Ananta dāsa: Your question raises several issues at once, but I will answer them one by one. First of all, eligibility to renounce household life has nothing to do with youth or old age. Some *grhastha bhaktas* are qualified by the *saṁskāras* acquired in this life and previous lives to give up household life even while they are young. For example, Sukadeva's previous *saṁskāras* enabled him to renounce household life from the moment of birth. One should only see that this eligibility is not artificial. If real detachment awakens, then youth is not an impediment.

Yādava dāsa: What is real renunciation and what is false renunciation?

Ananta dāsa: Real renunciation is so firm that it can never be broken at any time. False renunciation arises from deception, dishonesty, and the desire for prestige. Some people make a false show of renunciation to gain the respect that is offered to *nirapekṣa-bhaktas* who have given up household life, but such false detachment is futile and completely inauspicious. As soon as such a person leaves home, the symptoms of his eligibility for detachment disappear, and depravity sets in. JD, Ch 7, Page 159

Vijaya Kumāra and Vrajanātha said humbly with folded hands, “You are great renounced Vaiṣṇavas. We will be very fortunate if we can partake of your ambrosial remnants, and it will be an offense if we sit with you.”

The Vaiṣṇavas replied, “So far as Vaiṣṇavism is concerned, there is no difference between a householder and a renunciant. Vaiṣṇavas are compared only according to their devotion; the more advanced Vaiṣṇava is simply the one who has the deeper devotion for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.” JD, Ch 21, Page 501

Vijaya Kumāra took advantage of the opportunity, and said, “At this very moment Prabhu, the desire is arising in me to renounce householder life and obtain residence as a servant of your lotus feet. Vrajanātha is just a boy, and his mother wants him to become a *grhastha*, but he does not desire to do so. Please give your instruction as to what he should do in this connection.”

Bābāji: You have both received Kṛṣṇa's mercy. You should serve Kṛṣṇa by transforming your household into Kṛṣṇa's household. Everyone should act according to the instructions which Caitanya Mahāprabhu gave to the world.

He taught that there are two ways by which one may worship Bhagavān while in this world: one may live as a householder or in the renounced order. Until one is qualified to take up

the renounced order, he should remain a householder and engage in Kṛṣṇa's service. In the first twenty-four years of His manifest pastimes, Caitanya Mahāprabhu displayed the ideal for a *gr̥hastha* Vaiṣṇava, and during His last twenty-four years, He set the ideal for a renounced Vaiṣṇava.

Mahāprabhu's example as a *gr̥hastha* established the goal of householder life. In my opinion, you should also do the same. **You should not think that one cannot obtain the goal of Kṛṣṇa prema in householder life.** Most of Mahāprabhu's favored devotees were *gr̥hasthas*, and even Vaiṣṇavas in the renounced order of life pray for the dust from the lotus feet of those *gr̥hastha-bhaktas*. JD, Ch 22, Page 536

The *Bhakti-śāstras* explain the same principle to *Gopa-kumāra* in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

By one who cares for knowledge, renunciation, or material success, that goal cannot be achieved. It is only for one who, by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mercy, depends on Kṛṣṇa's devotional service and nothing else. BB, 2.2.204

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

To further clarify how to achieve pure devotional service, in this verse the *bhakti-śāstras* say that devotees of the Lord are uninterested in *karma*, *jñāna*, *vairāgya*, and other methods of advancement. Karma here means acting according to one's prescribed duty, *jñāna* means understanding the difference between spirit and matter (*ātmā* and *anātmā*), and *vairāgya* means aloofness from sense gratification and other material attractions. A person who relies on *karma*, *jñāna*, *vairāgya*, or any other such method cannot achieve *bhakti*, because *bhakti* is achieved only by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mercy.

But then, because Śrī Kṛṣṇa is naturally compassionate to every soul, why doesn't everyone obtain pure devotional service? The *bhakti-śāstras* answer that the special mercy of devotional service acts only when a candidate has no interest in *karma*, *jñāna*, or anything other than *bhakti*. Only such a person will be receptive to Kṛṣṇa's special mercy.

### How does detachment manifest?

The process of *sādhana-bhakti* is specifically designed to gradually increase one's desires and attachment for Kṛṣṇa and all things related to Him. As a result, in due course, material desires fade into the background, having less and less energy available to fuel them. It truly is as simple as that. *Bhakti* is a positive, accepting and joyful process, not a negative, repressive and burdensome process. Śrīla Prabhupāda's famous slogan is, "Chant and be happy!" Not, "Chant and feel guilty and frustrated!"

Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains this with a simple and perfect analogy in his commentary from *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*:

Devotion, direct experience of the Supreme Lord, and detachment from other things – these three occur simultaneously for one who has taken shelter of Kṛṣṇa, in the same way that

pleasure, fullness of the stomach and relief from hunger are experienced simultaneously, with each bite, for a person engaged in eating. SB, 11.2.42

From Śrī Viśvanātha's commentary:

An example is given to show that even at the stage of *sādhana*, which gives great happiness, one achieves the result. When there is *bhakti* in the form of hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa, the supreme deity, there should be a sweet experience. At that time, there should also be an experience of detachment from material happiness. These three should arise at the same time for the person who worships Kṛṣṇa.

Similarly for a person who eats, there is happiness, nourishment and disappearance of hunger with each mouthful. As one takes a mouthful of rice, this happens. Just as a person who eats a little gets a little satisfaction, a little nourishment (fullness of stomach) and a little relief from hunger, so a person who worships the Lord a little with hearing and chanting, gets a little experience of the Lord, and a little detachment from material life.

And just as a person who eats a lot gets full satisfaction, full nourishment and full relief from hunger, so a person who worships the Lord fully, experiences the Lord and becomes completely detached from material life. But though it is impossible to keep eating, by more worship of the Lord one becomes more capable of worshipping. That is the difference.

As always, we have to use practical common sense based on a very clear understanding of the process of *sādhana-bhakti* as delineated in the previous chapter. Rūpa Gosvāmī also describes how detachment manifests naturally from *bhakti* in the chapter on *sādhana-bhakti* in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, and it is elaborated upon and fully confirmed by Jīva Gosvāmī:

If a person has a taste for worshipping the Lord, even if he has strong material attractions, those attractions will be for the most part destroyed during *sādhana* without resorting to *vairāgya*. BRS, 1.2.254

Jīva Gosvāmī's Commentary:

Previously, *vairāgya* was condemned at the beginning of *bhakti* because it causes the heart to become hard. However, if *vairāgya* is forbidden, the person practicing *bhakti* will be filled with material desires, and having such desires is against the scriptures, for it is said:

The person absorbed in material enjoyment is far from being absorbed in Kṛṣṇa. How can a person going east catch an object moving to the west? *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*

To answer this dilemma, the author (Rūpa Gosvāmī) supplies this verse. Having a taste for *bhakti* will destroy the attachment to material objects. Thus, the hardness of heart caused by practice of *vairāgya* will not take place, and still detachment will manifest. At the stage of *ruci* or taste for *bhakti*, material attraction will be destroyed for the most part. The meaning is that it will be completely destroyed with the maturation of *bhakti*.

Clear and straight forward knowledge from our *ācāryas*. Unfortunately, many devotees are deterred by the force of their material desires. They give up their *sādhana* and *bhajana*, thinking, “I can’t chant my rounds every day or follow my vows perfectly, so what’s the use? Anything less won’t have any effect because I’m disobeying my spiritual master and he will be disappointed with me, and one cannot make advancement if one disobeys and displeases one’s *guru*.”

This kind of misguided, guilt-ridden mindset is due to having an incorrect and incomplete understanding of the process, and is often somewhat of a carry over from previous religious indoctrination (*saṁskāras*) from current and past lives. It is detrimental and counter productive to progressing in *sādhana-bhakti*, and it should not be allowed to fester in one’s mind. Let’s explore this further.

Many devotees mistakenly focus on the notion of “being pure” in their devotional activities. However, purity, like detachment, is one of many by-products of *bhakti*, and not an *anga* of *bhakti*. And purity itself is not the goal of *bhakti* – *prema* is the goal. *Prema* is unadulterated love, but it is the love that is sought, not exclusively the quality of purity. Purity comes without separate effort, as does detachment.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda didn’t actually say it, devotees often use the slogan, “Purity is the force” and attribute it to him. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda used the word “pure” in many different contexts, clearly implying varied meanings, and not just one specific definition. The soul by nature is part of Kṛṣṇa’s pure spiritual energy, but that pure nature is covered in material existence. Devotees strive for the perfection of *prema-bhakti* – pure love of God in devotional service. Purity, as it relates to everything directly connected to Kṛṣṇa, is the ultimate signification of the word “pure”.

Śrīla Prabhupāda often used the word “pure” to imply genuine sincerity and complete honesty in one’s intentions, motives and dealings in devotional service, as in the phrase, “Purity is the force.” That phrase does not mean complete spiritual purity, because that is patently impossible at the stage of *sādhana-bhakti*. You can’t just “be” pure. It’s not a switch you can turn on and off according to your state of mind. But you can, however, be fully and genuinely sincere and totally honest, and that mindset is the basis for *bhakti* that is free from duplicity, which results in purification in *sādhana-bhakti*.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda applied the word “pure” very broadly, too many devotees have extrapolated it to mean some sort of singular, absolute, exalted state of being that one must strive to maintain constantly or else all is for naught. This is an extremist mentality that should be rejected because is not favorable for progress in *bhakti*. Such people say that if you are following certain rules and regulations you are pure, and if you are not following strictly, then you are not pure and therefore cannot make spiritual advancement. This is a typical dogmatic, neophyte level of understanding and is also part of the fear-based mentality of many *vaidhi-bhaktas*.

Purity of action is not a choice or even a mindset. You are either fully pure or you’re not. Someone who is impure cannot simply decide to be pure by making a mental adjustment. You can’t vacillate between full purity and non-purity from moment to moment. The *jīva* is pure

spiritual energy, and *sādhana-bhakti* removes the impurities covering the *jīva*, thus gradually revealing the *jīva*'s original state of spiritual purity. Sincerity, honesty and freedom from duplicity are the basis for a favorable mindset in the execution of the process of *bhakti*.

Just to be absolutely clear, the foregoing analysis should not be misconstrued as a criticism of Śrīla Prabhupāda's use of the word "pure". It is a critique of the distorted misunderstandings that surround his application and intended meanings.

Moving on, there is much to be learned from the following verses and commentaries. I'm going to quote extensively here because I believe that it's important to hear our *ācāryas* speak at length on this subject to insure absolute clarity of understanding. It's also interesting to note that the word "pure" or the idea of being pure does not appear in any of these statements. As was mentioned earlier, think of this as having a short private *sādhū-saṅga* session with all of these realized Vaiṣṇavas discussing the current subject together. *Śravaṇam* at its ultimate best.

My dear King, if an agricultural field is cultivated again and again, the power of its production decreases, and whatever seeds are sown there are lost. Just as drops of *ghī* on a fire never extinguish the fire, but a flood of *ghī* will, similarly, overindulgence in lusty desires mitigates such desires entirely. SB, 7.11.33-34

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

Because it is impossible for a person with excessive material desires to give them up at once, the *śāstras* will allow him to enjoy with an honest heart rather than forbid the enjoyment altogether. Eventually then, detachment will take place. Examples are Yayāti and Saubhari.

After much cultivation sometimes a field is no longer suitable for germinating seeds, which may be destroyed by the acidic soil. The heart in which desire abides in abundance as various impressions, gradually becomes detached. A fire is not extinguished by sprinkling drops of *ghī* on it but by pouring a huge amount of *ghī* on it. Similarly, desire is extinguished by a huge amount of indulgence.

My dear Uddhava, if My devotee is not fully able to control his senses, he may sometimes be attracted to material enjoyment, but because of his engagement in devotional service, he will not be diverted by sense gratification. SB, 11.14.18

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

The Lord said, "What to speak of those devotees who have attained the platform of *rati* (*bhāva*), even neophyte devotees are assured of success. A neophyte devotee may sometimes be attracted to material enjoyment, but because of the strength of his sincere devotional service, he will not fall down from his exalted position." If a *jñānī* commits sinful activities, he immediately falls from his elevated position.

A devotee however, even though immature, never falls from the path of devotional service. Even if he displays occasional weakness, he is still considered a devotee if his devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa is very strong. This is confirmed by the Lord in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.30):

*api cet sudurācāro bhajate mām ananya-bhāk  
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ*

Even if one commits the most abominable action, if he is engaged in devotional service, he is to be considered saintly because he is properly situated in his determination.

In this regard, two examples can be given. Sometimes a heroic warrior is struck by the enemy's powerful weapon, but while simply tolerating the pain, he goes on to achieve victory. In the same way, one may be afflicted by a serious disease, but can be cured by taking the prescribed medicine.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's purport:

For the benefit of neophyte devotees who cannot fully control their senses, the Supreme Lord said, "Even though a devotee could not control his senses and thus remains attached to sense gratification, if he wants to advance in devotional service to Me and thus, enthusiastically engages in *sādhana-bhakti* so that he may gradually come to the platform of *bhāva-bhakti*, then he will never meet with defeat."

O Uddhava, just as a blazing fire burns firewood to ashes, devotional service executed for My pleasure completely destroys the sinful reactions of My devotees. SB, 11.14.19

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

If a devotee fails to control his senses and accidentally engages in sinful activities, the Lord will certainly burn to ashes all his sinful reactions, just as a blazing fire reduces wood to a pile of ashes.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's purport:

As long as we are intoxicated by material enjoyment, our propensity for serving the Supreme Lord is like smoldering ashes. But the moment our service attitude becomes prominent, our material inclinations are destroyed, just as a blazing fire burns wood to ashes. Lord Kṛṣṇa is glorious, and one who takes exclusive shelter of the Lord receives the unique benefits of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Having awakened his faith in the narrations of My glories, understanding the futility of all material activities, and knowing that sense gratification ultimately leads to misery, but still being unable to renounce all kinds of sensual diversions, My devotee should remain satisfied and worship Me with great faith and conviction. Even though he is sometimes engaged in



material enjoyment, My devotee knows that such activity simply leads to a miserable result, and so he sincerely repents such activities. SB, 11.20.27-28

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

Here, the Lord describes the primary characteristic of devotional service. A devotee naturally becomes indifferent to worldly activities and Vedic prescriptions because he knows that these will ultimately award him distress. He knows that material desires are sources of all miseries.

If a devotee, despite understanding this, is unable to completely renounce activities of sense gratification, he should still engage in the service of the Supreme Lord with firm determination. He should not become depressed, thinking that his devotional service is inadequate.

A devotee thinks, "Even if I meet with so many impediments and even though I am full of offenses, I will never for a moment give up the service of the Lord. Fruitive activities and mental speculation are useless, and so I will never accept these as my paths. I am still very attached to the objects of this world, and I know that this will only bring me misery. I must go on in this way, and simply hope for that day when the Lord will become merciful towards me."

Even if, due to material sentiment, a devotee associates with his wife and children and thus indulges in sense gratification, he thinks, "Alas! This material enjoyment creates many *anarthas* because it is opposed to my advancement in the Lord's devotional service. Although I had promised many times to give up this material enjoyment, I still indulge in sense gratification from time to time."

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's purport:

By hearing discussions of the Supreme Lord's glories, one is liberated from the desire to enjoy the fruits of *karma*. Only those who are faithfully engaged in hearing and chanting the holy names of the Supreme Lord can understand that desires for material enjoyment are the causes of distress.

When, even after trying to give up such distressful activities, devotees fail to completely do so, they should faithfully go on serving the Supreme Lord with determination. Devotees condemn the miserable condition that arises from material activities and while trying to give up such bad association, they engage in the service of the Supreme Lord with determination.

There is actually nothing inauspicious in the devotional service of the Lord. Occasional difficulties experienced by a devotee are due to his previous material activities. On the other hand, the endeavor for sense gratification is completely inauspicious. Thus, sense gratification and devotional service are directly opposed to each other. In all circumstances one should therefore remain the Lord's sincere servant, always believing in His mercy. Then one will certainly go back home, back to Godhead.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī talks about lust in *Mādhurya-kadambinī*:

Although lust is also considered a fault on the path of *bhakti*, one can still enter the devotional path, despite being still afflicted by lust and other material desires. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* says:

A person who faithfully hears or describes the Lord's pastimes of *rāsa-līlā* with the *gopīs* of Vraja attains supreme devotion of the Lord. He quickly becomes steady and conquers over the senses, giving up lust, the disease of the heart. SB, 10.33.39

In this text, "after attaining supreme devotion" is an unfinished act showing that *bhakti* can be attained even though one has lusty desires. This shows the most independent nature and power of *bhakti* to destroy lusty desires.

Sometimes lusty desires exist even while practicing devotion. From verses like, "If the most sinful person worships Me exclusively..." and, "Though my devotee is afflicted by lusty desires..." it is clear that though lusty desires may exist in a devotee, still he is not condemned even slightly. MK, 1.11

Here are some highlights from Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary on the above verse in *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* (10.33.39):

One who continuously hears, glorifies or writes poetry about this autumnal *rāsa-līlā* and similar pastimes of Kṛṣṇa described by other poets, first of all, even if he has the heart disease of material lust, he becomes imbued with *prema*. Then, by its effect, the disease of the heart is destroyed. Thus, it is understood here that this *prema* is independent; it is not weak or dependent like *jñāna-yoga*.

...One who faithfully hears and glorifies Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa dance* is described as learned, for he does not foolishly doubt, "How can *kṛṣṇa-prema* appear if material lust is present?" *Kṛṣṇa-prema* will definitely appear in that person who is devoid of foolishness, and who accepts the statements of scripture with full faith. However, *kṛṣṇa-prema* will not appear within those who have no faith in Kṛṣṇa or who offend the Holy Name.

These astonishing explanations offer very encouraging, pragmatic, real world advice from the highest sources, and it gives one hope rather than making one feel like a complete failure or offender because they have difficulty following their vows or maintaining steady *sādhana*. Too many devotees are under the misconception that they have to first, "renounce all material desires" and, "be completely detached" before they can make any significant advancement in *bhakti*. These misconceptions are what should be completely renounced.

Someone with an "honest heart" mentioned above is one who genuinely and sincerely wants to make spiritual progress and is being completely honest about his or her current condition of consciousness and capabilities. It is absolutely not a cop out or taking things cheaply like a *sahajiyā*. Not according to Sanātana Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī – and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Their positions are crystal clear and irrefutable.

Kṛṣṇa is unlimitedly affectionate (*bhakta-vātsalya*) and magnanimous (*audārya*) towards His devotees, and more than anything, He wants His devotees to succeed and attain *prema*. Kṛṣṇa is ready to accommodate every genuinely sincere devotee regardless of the extent of their struggles with the material energy.

*Anarthas* can impede or slow down the development of *bhakti*, but they don't prevent the progress of *bhakti* – not even close. Only Vaiṣṇava *aparādha* can destroy *bhakti*. However, eating the cow is unique in that it is almost impossible to make spiritual progress while still engaged in that particular *anartha* due to its extremely abominable nature, and Kṛṣṇa's special love for cows.

Shocking to most contemporary Vaiṣṇavas is the revelation of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, who stated in no uncertain terms in his hand written auto-biography, *Svalikita Jivani* (absolutely confirmed as authentic by Shukavak Dāsa in his book, *Hindu Encounter With Modernity*), that he was regularly eating meat and fish (goat and buffalo, but not cow). He even admitted enjoying and being attached to eating meat, right up until he took initiation from his *dīkṣā guru*, Bipin Bihari, at which point he states that he received the necessary spiritual strength to stop these activities. Astonishingly, he had been writing books about Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and *bhakti* for many years prior to being initiated and while eating meat and fish.

In his autobiography Kedar (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura) makes a number of frank statements about his diet in Bihar. Evidently, the Sharan region was famous for a particular kind of hot pickle that he liked to eat with fish and goat meat. He comments, “At that time I ate fish and meat, but I knew that killing animals was not good. I persisted simply because I enjoyed the food. I would have like to have eaten fish, but its quality was so poor that I ate more goat instead.” It was not until 1880, at the time of his Vaiṣṇava initiation, that Kedarnath finally gave up meat eating. Amongst Caitanya's followers meat eating is strictly shunned, so we must appreciate Kedarnath's candor in freely admitting this practice. HEWM, Page 71

These statements above from the *ācāryas* and *śāstra* should not be misinterpreted as a license to freely enjoy any sense gratification without restriction or remorse. They are meant to give a realistic mature understanding of these challenges to spiritual progress, along with a practical approach to understanding how to deal with them effectively. It also goes without saying that on the path of *bhakti* there is no leeway for being a pretender or cheater. No one can fool Kṛṣṇa.

One should instead renounce impractical, unrealistic, harshly negative, distorted, dogmatic, theoretical teachings and become detached from unqualified and inexperienced people, who think and teach that sense control is a gymnastic feat or simply a question of “surrendering to Kṛṣṇa”. We must choose our *śikṣā gurus* wisely.

The tendency for an aspiring devotee to vacillate in and out of a renunciation mindset is an age old, bewildering and debilitating condition. Listen to Viśvanātha Cakravartī's description of this mentality from *Mādhurya-kadambinī*. Although written hundreds of years ago, it sounds like he is writing about contemporary devotees:

Shall I just spend my life happily in family life, making my wife and children Vaiṣṇavas and worshipping the Lord? Or should I give them all up and go to Vṛndāvana and perfect myself by engaging full time in hearing and chanting with no distractions? Shall I wait until the last stage, after enjoying all sorts of pleasures, when I have finally understood that the whole material world is simply a forest fire of affliction? Or should I renounce right now?

Consider these verses:

Association with women is the way to death, like a blind well covered by grass. SB, 3.31.40

Those attachments that are very difficult to give up, beautiful wife, obedient sons, devoted friends, and vast empire, everything the heart desires, Mahārāja Bharata gave them up even in his youth, just as stool, due to his attraction for the Lord. SB, 5.14.43

Should I thus give up unreliable family life while still young? On the other hand, it is not proper to renounce immediately. Shouldn't I wait until the death of my old parents before renouncing? Alas! My parents are old and my wife is with a mere infant in her arms and other young children. Without me they will have no protection and will suffer unbearably. How will they live without me? SB, 11.17.57

Moreover, the scripture says:

If one gives up family life in an unfulfilled state, he will think of family life even after renouncing. If such a fool should die in that condition, he will go the darkest region of hell. SB, 11.17.58

By such statements, the Lord depreciates such renunciation. Therefore, for the time being, I will just work to keep my body alive. Later, after satisfying all my desires, I will enter Vṛndāvana and engage in worship of the Lord twenty-four hours a day.

After all, the scriptures point out:

*Jñāna* and *vairāgya* are not generally beneficial for practicing devotional service. SB, 11.20.31

According to this text, renunciation is a fault for the culture of *bhakti*. If it arises from *bhakti* itself however, that renunciation is not a fault but an effect (*anubhāva*) of *bhakti* and subordinate to it.

Of course, then there is the famous logic:

In whatever *āśrama* the *sannyāsī* stayed, they always gave him more than enough to eat. In the life of renunciation there is no worry for maintenance, so maybe I should renounce.

But on the other hand:

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, until people become Your devotee, their material attachments remain thieves, their homes prisons, and their affectionate feeling for their family, foot shackles. SB 10.14.36

Household life is a prison only for those who are attached, for a devotee, there is no harm in household life. Thus, shall I remain at home and engage in chanting or rather in hearing, or shall I engage in service? Rather, as Ambarisha Mahārāja remained in household life and performed all the *aṅgas* of *bhakti*, I shall do likewise.”

In this way, the mind spends time vacillating between household life and renunciation. When one imagines in this way, all types of options, it is called *vyudha vikalpa*, or extensive speculation. MK, 2.9

Sound familiar?

As always, the key is to first have a clear understanding of the process, and then determine a sensible balance in these activities by implementing appropriate regulation and control to the extent possible according to each individual’s capability. There is no “one size fits all.” Each devotee’s situation is a unique blend of his or her *karma* and the particular influences by *māyā*, according to their desires and conditioning. Thus, a customized solution should be developed and integrated into one’s devotional life. And this approach is dynamic, so it should be adjusted over time accordingly as one progresses on the path.

In all cases, if one sincerely wants to make spiritual progress, then one must absolutely maintain a basic daily *sādhana* of hearing, chanting, remembering, and so on, running on parallel tracks with the *anarthas* that are still being dealt with. Without the spiritual strength and counter balance of *sādhana-bhakti*, indulgence in sense gratification will simply drag one down further into illusion and deter any steady progress.

An important consideration here is that engaging in *sādhana* should not be thought of in terms of “performing obligatory duties”. *Sadhana-bhakti*, and especially *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhakti* is meant to focus one’s innermost desires and attraction towards Kṛṣṇa, and to develop a natural taste (*ruci*) for these activities. This is the most effective and direct remedy for the powerful attraction and desires for material objects, whether gross or subtle.

To conclude this section, Sanātana Gosvāmī provides yet another encouraging perspective that will probably shock many devotees. It is from Part Two of the *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, Chapter One, ironically titled, *Vairāgya*, where Uttara speaks to her son Parikṣit, who has just heard the entire *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* from Sukadeva Gosvāmī:

But even the devotees of the Personality of Godhead who still have material desires can enjoy the pleasures they wish and then become fully purified and go to the Lord’s abode. BB, 2.1.13

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

Vaiṣṇava devotees are more elevated than non devotee *paramahāṁsas*. Even a devotee burdened by material desires is in a better position than an impersonalist free from such desires. Still, just as both *karmīs* and *jñānīs* are distinguished in terms of their relative freedom from ulterior desires, so also are *bhaktas*. Most *karmīs* and *jñānīs* can approach perfection only gradually; only a few *paramahāṁsa-jñānīs* achieve immediate liberation.

Similarly, though all Vaiṣṇavas are sure candidates for ultimate perfection, the *sakāma-bhaktas*, those whose devotion to the Personality of Godhead is mixed with desires to control and enjoy, must first become purified. Still, although *sakāma-bhaktas* need further purification to qualify for entry into the kingdom of God, they should never be considered subject to the laws of material nature like the *karmīs* and *jñānīs*.

As stated here, *sakāma-bhaktas* live happily in this world, free from material restraints. They are at liberty to visit all the regions of this world, including the highest planets, beginning with *Mahār*, they can reach the subtlest stages on the *Arcir-ādi* path, and they can attain the *Vaikuṅṭha* realms within this universe like *Śvetadvīpa* and *Ramāpriya*.

Avoiding frustration from the deficiencies and miseries that taint every material situation, *sakāma-bhaktas* find happiness in this world. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī uses the word *bhuñjānāḥ* ("enjoying") in a form of the present tense to indicate that even while Vaiṣṇavas are finishing up their last enjoyment of the material world, the power of the Lord's devotional service purifies them enough to demolish all obstacles in their hearts. Their material business finished, they then achieve the Supreme Lord's eternal abode.

Rūpa Gosvāmī has no more to say about renunciation, detachment or *sannyāsa* in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, and certainly nothing contradictory to what has been presented herein. Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī fully support his conclusions, as does Sanātana Gosvāmī, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and others. The statements presented in this section on *anartha-nivṛtti* show an undeniably uniform and coherent line of thought and instruction that is shared by the previous *ācāryas* on this subject.

### ***Anartha-nivṛtti* – as we progress, so they diminish**

Now that I've analyzed and discussed the *ācāryas*' realistic and practical approach to diminishing and removing things unfavorable to *bhakti*, I now examine exactly how and when the different types of *anarthas* are nullified, according to the progressive stages of advancement.

Some devotees may feel that this is over thinking the subject. Do you really have to be so concerned about these details in your progress? Viśvanātha Cakravartī certainly thought it was worth reviewing. There is significant value in understanding these particular details. Laboring under misconceptions creates unwanted mental distress and dampens progress. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura also agrees and writes in *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*:

The devotees performing *sādhana-bhakti* should always be attentive to the condition of their devotion, perceiving the state yesterday and the improvement made today. If he perceives that after some days no progress has been made according to the stages given above, he must understand that some offense must have been committed. ... Those who do not care to examine their progress will advance very slowly due to the unseen obstacles they have created. Devotees, take special precaution in this matter! CS, Chapter 6, Part 2

The reasoning is that those who are very serious about attaining *prema-bhakti* through *vaidhī-bhakti* or *rāgānugā-bhakti* are always thoughtful about how things are progressing in their practice. These kinds of analytical details are an immense help in gaging one's progress, which naturally increases confidence and determination. And especially for a *rāgānugā-sādhaka* in whom greed has awakened, nothing is more important than moving forward towards the goal of *prema-bhakti*.

Another important consideration is that many Vaiṣṇavas do not correctly understand how *anartha-nivṛtti* takes place gradually throughout the stages of progress. Most devotees think that *anartha-nivṛtti* is a separate stage that you must first complete fully, and then move on to the next stage (*niṣṭhā*) after it's finished. That is absolutely not how it works. Far from it.

The reality is that the removal of *anarthas* is a gradual process and it is a direct result of progressing through the final stages of *niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, *āsakti* and *bhāva*. So it is factually a parallel process that continues up to and including the first stage of perfection – *bhāva*.

In *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, Third Shower, Viśvanātha Cakravartī first talks about the four different types of *anarthas*, and then he details the gradual process of nullification through the final stages of *sādhana-bhakti*. Here are the relevant excerpts. (refer to the diagram on page ?)

Four types of *anarthas* have been mentioned, namely:

1. those arising from previous sinful activity – *duṣkṛtottha*
2. those arising from previous pious activity – *sukṛtottha*
3. those arising from offenses against the Holy Name – *aparādhottha*
4. those arising from cultivation of bhakti – *bhakti-uttha*

*Anarthas* arising from previous sinful activities fall in the category of the five types of *klesha* previously mentioned: ignorance, false ego, attachment, hatred, and fear of death.

*Anarthas* arising from pious activities are the addictions to the enjoyments which arise from pious action. Some sages include the *anarthas* arising from pious activities under the categories of the *kleśas* mentioned above.

*Anarthas* which arise from offenses refers to those arising from the *nāma aparādhās*, not *sevā aparādhās* (such as entering the temple in a palanquin or with shoes). MK, 3.1

Next are the *anarthas* arising from *bhakti*. As many weeds grow along with the main plant, along with *bhakti* there appears acquisition of material wealth and other facilities, worship

and respect by others, a comfortable position and fame (*lābha*, *pūjā*, *pratiṣṭhā*). By their nature, they have the power to influence the heart of the devotee, expand, and retard the growth of the main plant intended for cultivation (*bhakti*). MK, 3.15

The four types of *anarthas* have five stages of *anartha-nivṛtti* (nullification):

1. partial – *eka-deśa-vārttini*
2. pervasive – affecting many *anarthas* – *bahu-deśa-vārttini*
3. almost complete – *prāyikī*
4. complete – *pūrṇā*
5. absolute – *ātyantikī*

Thus, immediately after starting the performance of devotional activities (*bhajana-kriyā*), there is nullification but it is limited, according to the famous logic: the town burned, the cloth is torn. In other words, when we hear that a town burned, we can imagine that some of it must still be existing, or if a cloth is torn, the pieces are still existing.

By continued practice:

With the appearance of *niṣṭhā*, the eradication is pervasive (affecting many *anarthas*).

With the appearance of *bhāva/rati*, the eradication is almost complete.

With the appearance of *prema*, the eradication is complete.

With the attainment of the Lord's association, the eradication is absolute, with no possibility of their reappearance. MK, 3.16

Here we confront the startling and sobering revelation that even at the stage of *bhāva/rati*, *anarthas* are still present, because the eradication is, “almost complete”. Only at *prema* are the *anarthas* completely gone, and only with attainment of the Lord is the eradication absolute. These are extremely important details that must be understood without confusion. As we will read in the next section on Vaiṣṇava *aparādha*, even at the stage of *bhāva* one can still fall from that exalted position. Śrī Viśvanātha then breaks down the eradication phases for specific types of *anarthas*.

The eradication of the *anarthas* arising from previous sin is as follows:

With the performance of *bhajana-kriyā*, the eradication is almost complete.

With the appearance of *niṣṭhā* eradication is complete.

With the appearance of *āsakti* it is absolute.

The eradication of *anarthas* arising from *bhakti* is as follows:

With the performance of *bhajana-kriyā*, eradication is partial.

With the appearance of *niṣṭhā* it is complete.



With the appearance of *ruci* it is absolute.

The wise self-realized souls have concluded this by thoroughly considering all matters. MK, 3.18

Anticipating some opposition to the above analysis, Viśvanātha Cakravartī writes:

One may raise the objection that these stages of extinguishing *anarthas* do not apply to devotees, quoting hundreds of verses from *śāstra* (or the Vedabase!). MK, 3.19

Śrī Viśvanātha then quotes three verses from *śāstra* about the supreme power of the Holy Name to remove *anarthas* and all material contamination at once. He then says:

This is all true. One should have no doubt that the Holy Name has in all cases such inestimable power. However, the Holy Name, being unhappy with offenses committed against it, does not manifest its complete power in the offender. This is indeed the reason sinful tendencies continue in the offender. Still, the servants of death have no power to attack such a person (as in Ajāmila’s case). Though this is true, they have no means of purification other than becoming free from *nāma-aparādha*. MK, 3.19

Śrī Viśvanātha then explains:

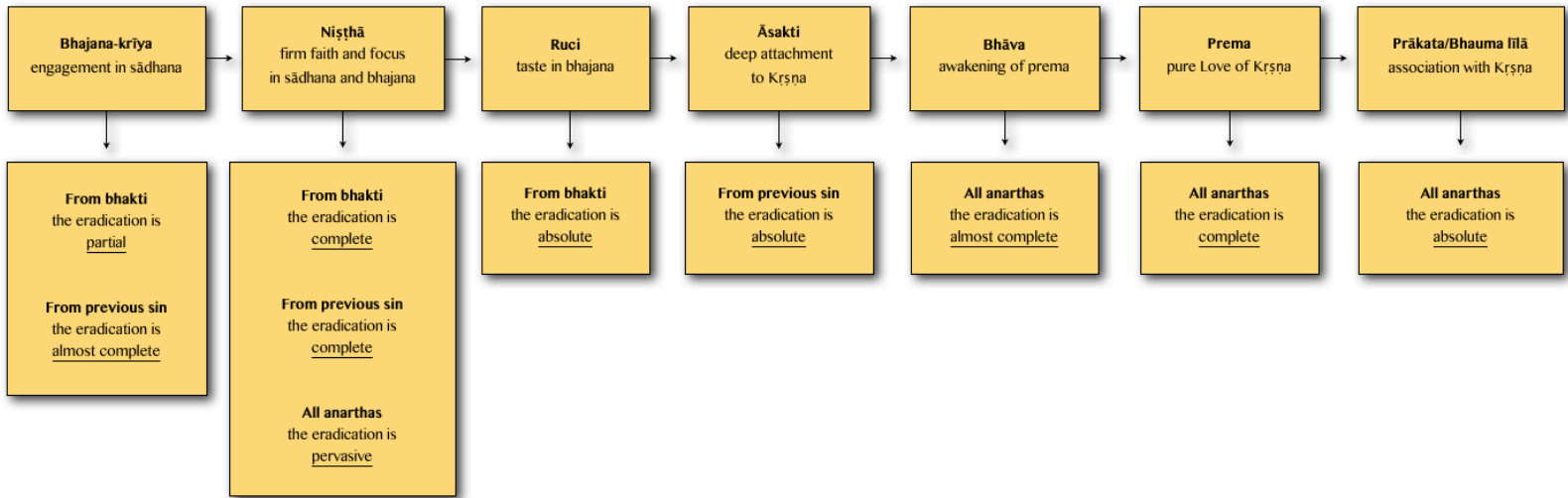
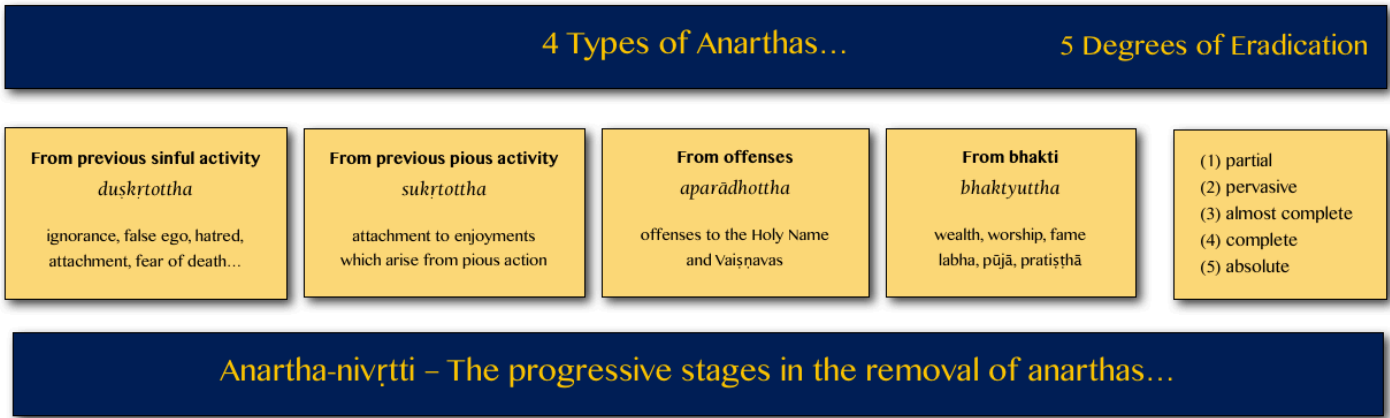
In the same way, the offending devotee will at first suffer some miseries. As he performs sincere service to the devotees, the scriptures, and spiritual master, the Name will again gradually manifest mercy and gradually eliminate his *anarthas*. Thus, one cannot argue against the gradual elimination of *anarthas*.

Someone may argue that, I have never committed any offenses. One should not make such statements. Though the offense may not have been done recently, it may have been done in the past, but one can infer the existence of offenses by their effect. The effect of offenses is that a person will not manifest any symptoms of *prema* by performance of *nāma kīrtana*. MK, 3.20

### ***Anartha-nivṛtti* – Summary and conclusions...**

This detailed analysis of the phases of *anartha-nivṛtti* by Viśvanātha Cakravartī sheds much needed light on how one makes progress in *sādhana-bhakti* in relation to removing unwanted obstacles on the path. This deeper understanding will instill confidence and enthusiasm in serious practitioners, as it is absolutely clear that advancement in *bhakti* is not an “all or nothing” proposition. Listen to the definition of a *sādhaka* from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

Those persons are called practitioners (*sādhakas*) who have developed *rati* for Kṛṣṇa but have not completely extinguished the *anarthas*, and who are qualified to see Kṛṣṇa directly. BRS 2.1.276



Such devotees are still at the stage of practice (*sādhana*), yet they have developed some level of *rati* (*bhāva*) for Kṛṣṇa and they are even qualified to “see” Kṛṣṇa directly – yet they still have *anarthas*! Thus, the notion that one must be absolutely “free from ALL material desires and ALL bad habits” before any meaningful progress can be made, is clearly not supported by Sanātana Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, or Kṛṣṇa. *Anarthas* may remain even up to the stage of *bhāva*, the preliminary stage of pure love of Kṛṣṇa.

This study of *anartha-nivṛtti*, should never be misconstrued to imply that unrestricted indulgence in sense gratification is encouraged or ignored. What we should take away from this study is a pragmatic perspective that is realistically applicable in our lives, versus an idealistic, impossible, impractical, repressive view that has never, and will never, yield successful results. Artificial repressive approaches will end only in frustration, discouragement and sometimes even rejection of the path of *bhakti*.

In other words, engaging in the processes of *bhakti* to attain *prema*, also results in many by-products along the way, one of which is *anartha-nivṛtti*. *Anartha-nivṛtti* is an on-going process that starts when one begins engaging in *sādhana-bhakti* at the stage of *bhajana-kriyā*, and ends when one attains *prema*, as is confirmed by the *ācāryas* and delineated in detail herein. I recommend that readers study the *anartha-nivṛtti* diagram on this page to understand this process clearly and conclusively.

*Anartha-nivṛtti* has phases of progress. Eventually, we will reach the point where our material desires and tendencies for behaviors and activities that are unfavorable for progress in *bhakti* have been reduced to a level where they no longer represent major impediments to our progress. Our focus on *sādhana* will then intensify naturally and become steady.

That is the stage of *niṣṭhā* – steadiness and firm determination, from which point we can make rapid and steady progress towards the goal, including removing all remaining *anarthas*. This is confirmed by all of the *ācāryas*. The milestone stage of *niṣṭhā* means that, although such desires and inclinations may remain, they become secondary concerns in deference to the primary endeavor of focusing on our *sādhana* and internal *bhajana* with a genuine taste for these activities (*ruci*).

The key in all of this is that one's intent must be genuine and truly sincere in nature. Kṛṣṇa knows who is being a phony or a cheater and they will eventually be exposed by their inevitable failure to control their impulses. One must be thoroughly honest about one's current status and stage of progress on the path of *bhakti*. Kṛṣṇa is most interested in the honesty and sincerity underlying and motivating one's endeavors.

Someone may still argue that if a devotee is truly sincere, they will never engage in *anarthas*, otherwise, it means they must not be sincere. This is not a valid argument because it is not universally accepted as true, nor is it a fact based in actual reality or confirmed by any *ācāryas*, as we have read so far in this chapter. It is an example of dogmatic idealism imbued with ignorance that has no place in the philosophy of *bhakti*. It is an aspect of fundamentalism, which is also rejected on the path of *bhakti*. The *ācāryas* statements have more than confirmed this fact.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura summarizes this succinctly in *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*, Chapter 6 – Stages in the Development of *prema*:

By cultivating devotion, gradually, attachment to material pleasure, sinful conduct, violence, greed and other material habits decrease; the devotee becomes free of material desire. This is the third stage, clearing the sins (*anartha-nivṛtti*).

As desires dissipate, attachments to things other than the Lord also disappear. Faith becomes steadiness in the Lord. As long as the *anarthas* remain, faith cannot be steadily applied to one object. To the extent that *anarthas* are extinguished, faith turns into steadiness (*niṣṭhā*). This is the fourth stage in attaining *prema*.

Attaining steadiness, devotees perform their devotional activities and take association with more care. By this, the *anarthas* are further reduced and steadiness turns to joy. This is called taste or *ruci*. This is the fifth step.

With taste for Kṛṣṇa established, everything else becomes tasteless. When *ruci* becomes more intense, along with greater destruction of sin, *āsakti* appears. *Āsakti* is still within *sādhana-bhakti*. *Sadhana* has become perfect, *āsakti* reaches fullness, and the devotee feels successful. This is the sixth stage. When *āsakti* becomes full it is called *bhāva*, *rati* or the seedling of *prema*. CS, Chapter 6, Part 2

## Vaiṣṇava *aparādha* – the most devastating *anartha*

Among the four types of *anarthas*, *nāma aparādha* is the most serious stumbling block for all Vaiṣṇavas. *Nāma aparādha* includes Vaiṣṇava *aparādha* which is the single most devastating of all *anarthas* and *aparādhas*. Without a clear understanding and resolution of this issue, one's progress could be severely impacted, possibly for many lifetimes, what to speak of in this life.

Unfortunately, Vaiṣṇava *aparādha* is a malicious epidemic that is rampant throughout the contemporary worldwide Vaiṣṇava community, as witnessed by the over abundance of blasphemous statements found online on numerous websites. The seriousness of these offenses cannot be over stated. Most Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas understand the potentially damaging effects of Vaiṣṇava *aparādha* through Lord Caitanya's description of the offense known as the, "mad elephant", which runs wild through one's devotional garden, obliterating the creeper of *bhakti*.

If the devotee commits an offense at the feet of a Vaiṣṇava while cultivating the creeper of devotional service in the material world, his offense is compared to a mad elephant that uproots the creeper and breaks it. In this way the leaves of the creeper are dried up. CC, 2.19.156

It appears quite obvious that many Vaiṣṇavas do not comprehend the factual ramifications of such offenses, so I will expand upon the basic understanding to make the point more explicitly and emphatically. Many offenders (*aparādhīs*) try to justify their attacks by skewed philosophical word jugglery, which sadly does not conform to the standards set by the *ācāryas*.

There is a fundamental misunderstanding that is prevalent in the Vaiṣṇava *aparādhas* that are committed in many online diatribes against fellow Vaiṣṇavas, and the rationale goes something like this: "A certain Vaiṣṇava is not following this or that rule(s) and is not chanting sixteen rounds daily, and as such he is disobeying his spiritual master. Therefore, I (the offender) conclude and declare publicly that he is a reject disciple, completely condemned and rejected by his *guru* and thus, not a Vaiṣṇava anymore, so it's perfectly fine to severely trash him in any way I choose without fear of committing an offense."

Unfortunately (for the offender) this perverted reasoning is fatally flawed and highly offensive in and of itself. Ignorance of the law is no excuse in these delicate matters. In light of the above typical offensive behavior, let's examine some clarifying statements about Vaiṣṇava *aparādha* made by Viśvanātha Cakravartī in *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, 3.5. After describing methods of repentance and atonement he says:

By the divine power of *nāma kīrtana*, certainly in time that person will be delivered from his offense. However, he should not justify himself by arguing that *śāstra* says, *nāmaparādha yuktānām nāmanyeva harantyaḡham*: The Holy Name alone is sufficient to deliver an offender. So what is the need of humbling himself by offering repeated respects and service to the Vaiṣṇava that he has offended? This type of mentality makes him guilty of further offense.

Nor should one be of the mentality to think that the offense of *sādhu nindā* discriminates between types of Vaiṣṇavas. It does not refer only to one who is fully and perfectly qualified with all the qualities mentioned in scripture, such as mercifulness, never harming others, and forgiving to all living entities: *kṛpātur akṛta-drohas titikṣuh sarva dehinam*. SB 11.11.29

A person cannot minimize his offense by pointing out some defect in the devotee. [read that sentence three times]

In answer the scriptures say: *sarvācāra vivarjitaḥ sathadhiyo bratyā jagadvancakaḥ*:

Even a person who is of very bad character, a cheater, devoid of proper behavior, malicious, devoid of *saṁskāras*, and full of worldly desires, if he surrenders to the Lord, must be considered a *sādhu*. What to speak of a pure Vaiṣṇava.

Sometimes a serious offense has been committed against a Vaiṣṇava, but the Vaiṣṇava does not become angry because of his exalted nature. Still the offender should fall at that devotee's feet and seek ways of pleasing him to purify himself. Though the Vaiṣṇava may forgive offenses, **the dust of his feet does not tolerate the offenses and delivers the fruits of the offense on the guilty person.** For it is said:

Those who envy exalted saints are certainly diminished by the dust of their lotus feet. SB 4.4.13

In *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, Third Shower, Viśvanātha Cakravartī states:

Seeing the following verse from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, another doubt arises:

Oh foremost of *brāhmaṇas*, what are the offenses against the Name of the Lord which cancel the results of all one's performances, and lead to a material conception even of transcendental topics?

In other words, repeatedly hearing and chanting the Lord's name should give *prema*, serving the sacred *tīrthas* should bestow perfection, tasting repeatedly the *ghī*, milk and *betel prasādam* should destroy all desires for sense enjoyment. So what are the grave offenses which cancel these results and cause all these spiritually potent activities to appear material?

This very startling and unnerving question is being raised. If this is so, does it follow that a person who commits a *nāma-aparādha* becomes averse to the Lord and thus, cannot even take shelter of *guru* or perform devotional activities?

This is true. As during a serious fever, losing all taste for food, a person finds it impossible to eat, so a person who commits a serious offense, loses scope for hearing, chanting and performing devotional activities. There is no doubt about this. MK, 3.21

Thus, those who arbitrarily assign themselves the role of “*bhakti* enforcement police” and who then assume the position of judge, jury and executioner in relation to another Vaiṣṇava's status

and behavior on the path of *bhakti*, have unwittingly condemned themselves by their unwarranted vitriol towards other practicing Vaiṣṇavas. There is no escaping this conclusion by any amount of word jugglery or rationalizations. And once again, ignorance of the law is no excuse.

As we learned in the previous section on *anartha-nivṛtti*, even at the stage of *bhāva*, where one finally perceives one's eternal spiritual identity (*siddha-svarūpa*) and even meets Kṛṣṇa briefly (*sphūrti*), there are still *anarthas* present, though they are more or less neutralized.

It is explained in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* how one can still fall down from the stage of *bhāva* and destroy or diminish one's *bhāva* and possibly even one's eternal *rasa*! This would only happen due to a severe offense against a Vaiṣṇava or Kṛṣṇa, but it can happen. Only when one reaches the platform of *prema* is one guaranteed never to fall down.

Rūpa Gosvāmī explains:

Moreover, it should be stated: By an offense against the dearest devotee of the Lord, even real *bhāva* will be destroyed, if the offense is grave. If the offense is medium, the *bhāva* will turn to *bhāvābhāsa*. If the offense is slight, the *bhāva* will become an inferior type. BRS, 1.3.54

Jīva Gosvāmī's Commentary:

By two types of grave offenses – offense to the dearest devotee or to Kṛṣṇa Himself – even real *bhāva* is destroyed. By medium offense, *bhāva* becomes *bhāvābhāsa* – a shadow of *bhāva*. By slight offense, the *bhāva* degrades in category. Becoming an inferior type means that there will be degradation in terms of the five *rasas* and the eight stages from *mahābhāva* down to *rati*. Thus, change in *bhāva* will take place according to the seriousness of the offense.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's Commentary:

If the *aparādha* is slight, the *bhāva* changes type. *Madhura-rati* becomes *dāsyā-rati*. *Dāsyā-rati* becomes *sānta-rati*.

The main points above should be crystal clear and very sobering. Vaiṣṇava *aparādha* is potentially devastating and should never be taken lightly by any serious devotees.

However, an important question still remains unanswered: “Are we to simply overlook the bad behavior of a Vaiṣṇava, even criminal behavior, and not say anything ever – just turn a blind eye?” Absolutely not. There is a clear distinction between *aparādha*, valid criticism and justice.

If a Vaiṣṇava is breaking the laws, either civil, criminal or moral, by stealing, corruption, molesting children, mental and physical abuse, and so on, and one is in a position to expose these crimes to the authorities, then one is obligated to do so, as well as doing whatever one is capable of to bring the offender to the justice system for conviction and punishment. No one, Vaiṣṇava or not, should be allowed to get away with any criminal activities. The offender can

still chant and read in jail while he is atoning for his crimes against society. Vaiṣṇavas who engage in criminal behavior do not get a religious free pass.

If the crimes occur within an institution, both the institutional authorities and law enforcement should be notified. No cover ups should be allowed or tolerated and that should also be reported if discovered. There is no *aparādha* for reporting the criminal behavior of individuals or institutions, and seeking justice.

*Aparādha* becomes a factor if Viśvanātha Cakravartī's important qualifier is still part of the equation, i.e., "if he surrenders to the Lord". In other words, if the perpetrator is genuinely trying to maintain their status as a practicing Vaiṣṇava, then it is an *aparādha* if one's criticism is full of animosity and malice directed specifically towards that individual.

Furthermore, if you discuss the events and circumstances of that Vaiṣṇava's bad behavior, primarily for the edification and emotional resolution of all affected parties, then there is no offense. The same applies to a neutral discussion by outside parties, if meant to foster a better understanding of that particular undesirable behavior and its consequences. However, if the discussions include statements meant to denigrate and insult the offender, then an offense (*aparādha*) is committed. It's a fine line, so it must be tread carefully. Hate the sin, not the sinner.

Here's another example to consider. If you don't like a particular Vaiṣṇava's personality, behavior or attitude, and he or she is engaged in legitimate missionary work of spreading Vaiṣṇavism, but not committing any crimes, it is Vaiṣṇava *aparādha* to criticize or insult them simply based on disliking their demeanor or methods.

If you don't agree with his or her philosophical presentation of Vaiṣṇava philosophy because you believe it is based on a flawed understanding of *śāstra*, you have every right to publicly present arguments with appropriate *śāstric* substantiation to challenge the philosophical positions. In doing so, there is no *aparādha*. But your critique must focus on the philosophical issues and not the person, otherwise it would be *aparādha*.

This also includes disagreeing with how Vaiṣṇavas manage their affairs within a spiritual organization. If you criticize the methods and management decisions but not the persons, then there is no offense. If you vilify the persons, then you have committed Vaiṣṇava *aparādha*.

Let us all humbly beg forgiveness from any Vaiṣṇavas we may have offended, knowingly or otherwise, and offer pardons to those who request forgiveness for having committed offenses against us.

### ***Niṣṭhā* – firm faith and focus in *sādhana* and *bhajana***

*Niṣṭhā* is the stage where one is firmly fixed in their pursuit of *prema* on the path of *sādhana-bhakti*. At that stage, a relationship (*rasa*) with Kṛṣṇa in *prema* becomes the primary goal of one's life, to the subordination of everything else. As we have learned, *anarthas* will still be

present, but at the stage of *niṣṭhā* they have been reduced to a level that facilitates attaining steadiness in one's *sādhana* and *bhajana*.

Everyone has a certain capacity for endeavoring in life that can be directed towards fulfilling their material desires or their spiritual desires. When one's spiritual goals take precedence and one's material aspirations have become secondary or abandoned, in spite of lingering desires, then one has the qualifications necessary to achieve *niṣṭhā*.

And once again, this stage cannot be achieved simply by a mechanical effort to forcefully repress material desires, in favor of the activities and goals of *sādhana*. *Niṣṭhā* is achieved naturally, as a consequence of the purifying potency of *sādhana-bhakti*. The purification of *sādhana-bhakti* manifests as a result of the increase in one's desires for hearing, chanting and thinking about everything related to Kṛṣṇa, and this becomes the primary focus of one's consciousness and endeavors.

In *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, Second Shower, Viśvanātha Cakravartī discusses *bhajana-kriyā*, which is the stage where aspiring new devotees become engaged in *sādhana-bhakti* according to the directions of their *guru*. In the beginning, this engagement is not steady (*aniṣṭhā*) due to the presence of many *anarthas*, which gradually begin to diminish as *bhajana-kriyā* progresses. Śrī Viśvanātha lists the characteristics of unsteady practice and then describes them each in detail for the rest of the chapter:

Next comes *bhajana-kriyā*, he begins to practice different types of devotional activities. This also is of two varieties: unsteady (*aniṣṭhitā*) and steady (*niṣṭhitā*). Unsteady performance of devotional activities is of six types (in sequential order):

- (1) false confidence – *utsāha-mayī*
- (2) sporadic endeavor – *ghana-taralā*
- (3) indecision – *vyudha-vikalpā*
- (4) struggle with the senses – *viṣaya-saṅgarā*
- (5) inability to uphold vows – *niyamākṣamā*
- (6) enjoying the facilities offered by *bhakti* – *taraṅga-raṅgiṇī*

Then, in the Fourth Shower, Śrī Viśvanātha gives a detailed analysis of the symptoms and characteristics of *niṣṭhā*, starting with two well known verses from *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*. I'm including the entire first two sections because they are filled with illuminating and very relevant information:

*śṛṅvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ  
hṛdy antaḥ stho hy abhadrāṇi vidhunoti suhṛt satām*

*naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu nityam bhāgavata-sevayā  
bhagavaty uttama-śloke bhaktir bhavati naiṣṭhikī*



Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is affectionate to His devotees and situated in their hearts, destroys all inauspicious elements of those who hear topics about the Lord. When the inauspicious elements have been generally destroyed by devotional service, steady devotion to the Lord appears. SB:1.2.17-18

The first verse (*śṛnvatām sva-kathāḥ...*) refers to the stage of *aniṣṭhitā* or unsteady *bhakti*, for *naiṣṭhikī bhakti* or *niṣṭhitā bhakti* makes its appearance later in the second verse. *Abhadrāṇi vidhunoti* (destruction of inauspicious elements) which appears between these two stages, refers to the stage of *anartha-nivṛtti*. The words *naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu* (inauspiciousness is almost destroyed) means at the stage of *niṣṭhā*, only a small portion of *anarthas* remains.

Thus, the proper order according to *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* is *bhajana-kriyā*, *anartha-nivṛtti*, *niṣṭhā*. Therefore, in its proper place, *niṣṭhitā bhakti* will be discussed now.

*Niṣṭhā* means to be endowed with the quality of steadiness, or non-movement. Though a person tries for steadiness every day, while *anarthas* are still present, he will not attain steadiness.

This is due to these five persistent obstacles:

- (1) sleep – *laya*
- (2) distraction – *vikṣepa*
- (3) indifference or disinterest in spiritual topics – *apratipatti*
- (4) tendency toward bad habits – *kaṣāya*
- (5) taste for material enjoyment – *rasāsvāda*

After the stage of *anartha-nivṛtti*, when these obstacles are almost completely destroyed, one achieves steadiness. Thus, the symptom of *niṣṭhā* is the absence of the above mentioned obstacles.

*Laya* refers to the tendency to sleep during *kīrtana*, *śravaṇa* and *smaraṇa*, in order of increasing tendency.

*Vikṣepa* refers to distraction toward mundane topics while performing service (gossiping during *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, *smaraṇam...*).

*Apratipatti* refers to the occasional inability to perform *kīrtana*, and other *aṅgas*, in spite of the absence of *laya* or *vikṣepa*.

*Kaṣāya* means the tendency to indulge in anger, greed, pride, and so on, due to past bad habits.

*Rasāsvāda* refers to inability to absorb the mind in *kīrtana* if one gets the opportunity for material sense pleasure.

*Niṣṭhitā-bhakti* appears in the absence of these faults.

*tadā rajas-tamo-bhāvāḥ kāma-lobhādayaś ca ye  
ceta etair anāviddham sthitam sattve prasidatī*

At that time, being completely free from the influences of *tamo* and *raja guna*, such as lust, greed and other impurities, the heart is satisfied in a state of goodness. (SB, 1.2.19)

Here the word *ca* is used in its collective sense to refer to all of these unwanted qualities. Thus, in the stage of *niṣṭhā* the modes of ignorance and passion are no longer present. However, the words *etair anāviddham* (no longer affected by these) indicate that these impurities are still present to some slight degree at the stage of *niṣṭhā*, but do not act as an obstacle to *bhakti*. All traces will be removed when one reaches the stage of *bhāva*. MK, 4.1-2

More conclusive understanding that we don't have to be completely free from all *anarthas* to achieve *niṣṭhā* and progress to *ruci*, *āśakti* and *bhāva*. To progress to the stage of *ruci*, where one increasingly tastes the transcendental sweetness of Kṛṣṇa within the heart through the activities of *sādhana* and *bhajana*, one must have a steady, strong focus and determination, motivated by an ever growing intense desire to enter Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in a particular relationship.

In other words, the increasing taste and desire causes the corresponding manifestation of strength and determination due to a deep and growing attachment – *rāga*. That is *niṣṭhā*. Śrī Viśvanātha continues his explanation:

*Niṣṭhā*, steadiness, is of two types:

- (1) concerning *bhakti* directly – *sākṣāt-bhakti-vārtinī*
- (2) concerning elements favorable to *bhakti* – *bhakti-anukūla-vastu-vārtinī*

*Sākṣāt-bhakti* has unlimited forms, still, there are three basic divisions:

- (1) bodily – *kāyikī*
- (2) vocal – *vācikī*
- (3) mental – *mānasī*

According to some authorities, first one attains steadiness in bodily services, then in vocal activities (*kīrtana*, and so on), and finally in mental activities (remembering, meditation). Others, however, disagree, saying that eagerness to serve the Lord in a particular manner develops first according to the individual natures of the devotees, whose bodily, vocal and mental strength may vary. Their version is that there is no such progression. MK, 4.3

Śrī Viśvanātha offers two versions from authorities as to how *niṣṭhā* is attained. The latter version is based on the *rāgānugā-sādhaka* acquiring intense eagerness (*laulyam*) to serve Kṛṣṇa in a chosen *rasa*. That type of motivation is the greatest stimulant towards attaining steadiness in one's endeavors. For those qualified to practice *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*, it is understood

that *lobha* (spiritual greed) has manifested in their hearts, and that is the underlying driving force of their endeavors.

Śrī Viśvanātha continues his explanation by differentiating between outward appearances, inner focus, and steadiness in *bhakti*. In other words, as the saying goes, “You can’t always judge a book by its cover”:

Elements favorable to *bhakti* (*bhakti-anukūla-vastu-vārtinī*) refer to humility, giving respect to others, friendliness, and mercifulness. However, sometimes steadiness in such qualities may be seen in a self-controlled devotee who has no steadiness in *bhakti*. While elsewhere, steadiness in these qualities may not be perceived in an arrogant devotee who has attained steadiness in *bhakti*.

In spite of this, by the presence or absence of steadiness in *bhakti* itself (*sākṣāt bhakti*), rather than in the qualities of *bhakti*, learned wise men understand the actual presence or absence of *niṣṭhā*, steadiness. Inexperienced perception cannot substantiate the truth.

This is confirmed by the cited verses, *bhaktir bhavati naiṣṭhikī*, with the appearance of *naiṣṭhikī-bhakti*, *tada rajas-tamo-bhāvāh... etair anāviddham*, though traces of the qualities born of *rajas* and *tamo guna* may be present, they no longer affect the devotee.

In summary, what has been shown is that laxity or intensity of effort, and difficulty or ease in performance of devotional activities (*sādhana*), such as hearing and chanting, are the criteria for discriminating between the two types of *bhakti*, namely unsteady (*aniṣṭhā*) and steady (*niṣṭhā*). MK, 4.3

This section was essentially a review of the entire Fourth Shower of *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, which deals exclusively with *niṣṭhā*. Because it is so comprehensive, I felt no other references were necessary to establish this *tattva* and *siddhānta* further.

## What are the criteria for being a pure devotee, self-realized, or liberated?

This section may at first seem to be a bit out of place, but it is in fact very relevant to the book’s main subject matter, as well as being a logical convergence of all the knowledge presented up to this point. It will also enhance our understanding of the stages of progress on the path of *bhakti*, insofar as the practical application of this knowledge is concerned. In addition, it will provide the clarity necessary for determining the most fruitful association for one’s progress on this path.

The terms “pure devotee” “self-realized” and “liberated” have been used repeatedly by Śrīla Prabhupāda throughout his books, and throughout *śāstra* in general, but what exactly do those terms mean? How are they correctly defined and understood? There are numerous verses in various *śāstras* that delineate the qualities of a “self-realized” or “liberated” soul, and Śrīla Prabhupāda has written and made many statements saying, “a pure devotee does this and that or

is like this and that”. Then there are the *mahābhāgavatas*, *paramāhaṁsas*, *mahārṣis*, *uttama-adhikārīs*, and so on.

Are all of these variously lauded and exalted personalities on the same transcendental platform, or does each title imply a different level of advancement and/or realization? An inquiring practitioner can easily flounder in a sea of *ślokas* without obtaining an accurate or comprehensive understanding. Unfortunately, many Vaiṣṇavas seem to have an idealized or skewed concept of a pure devotee that is often not in sync with what the *ācāryas* have presented.

Is a pure devotee recognized or authenticated by examining the long list of qualities mentioned in various *śāstras*, and then determining if those qualities are fully manifest in that individual? What if they don't pass the “pure devotee check list test” and are missing several qualities – do we reject them as not being “fully” pure? And who is qualified or authorized to make such evaluations and determinations? Is there a “Pure Devotee Verification Committee” in some Vaiṣṇava organization?

Does a *sādhaka* become a pure devotee simply by perfectly following and emulating all of the qualities found in those lengthy lists in *śāstra*? If someone is consciously emulating those qualities, is that the cause of them becoming a pure devotee, or are those qualities actually symptoms and by-products of internal transformations of the heart? These questions, and many others, are answered by the *ācāryas*.

In the modern Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community, many devotees have assumed the role of *dīkṣā-guru*, but have later stepped down from that position in disgrace due to inappropriate and unacceptable behavior. However, during their sojourn as a *dīkṣā-guru*, their disciples and followers addressed them with adulatory saintly names and worshiped them as if they were pure realized devotees, and these *gurus* willingly accepted the adulation showered on them.

So the question is: were they truly pure devotees who then some how fell from that highly elevated position? Or were they never pure devotees or fully self-realized, but simply pretended to be and allowed others to treat them that way? Let's examine what the *ācāryas* have written.

As shown in the previous chapter, the *ācāryas* have all agreed on the exact step by step path that all *sādhakas* must traverse if they want to attain *prema* for Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, which is the highest goal of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Certainly one who is fully sincere and honestly endeavoring for *prema* is motivated by essentially pure intentions, in spite of lingering *anarthas*. If such a *sādhaka* is eventually blessed with *prema* without having been waylaid by any major setbacks along the way, then we could say in a broader sense that this person was a pure devotee throughout his or her journey to *prema*.

According to the *ācāryas*, *bhāva* is the first stage of perfection of one's practice (*sādhana*). *Bhāva* is described as a ray of the sun of *prema*. This is the actual threshold of one's eternal transcendental existence. Rūpa Gosvāmī dedicates a full chapter to *bhāva-bhakti* in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. Here are some highlights.

That part of *bhakti* is called *bhāva*, whose essence is *saṁvit* and *hlādinī śakti*, which is one ray of the sun of *prema* which will soon rise in the heart, and which softens the heart with desires to meet, serve and exchange love with the Lord. BRS, 1.3.1

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

Furthermore, this *bhāva* softens the heart (mind) with its desires for meeting the Lord, serving the Lord favorably, and attaining the friendship of the Lord. This *bhāva* is also the sprout which will become *prema*, and which will be described later.

By comparing *prema* to the sun, there is the suggestion that, just as the sun will appear soon after the light of dawn, *prema* will appear very soon after the appearance of *bhāva*. As well, it is like a ray of the sun; it is the first glow of the sun of *prema*. It will be explained later that *prema* is the condensed form of *bhāva*.

This *bhāva*, whose very form is the essence of the *hlādinī* function of the Lord, should also be understood to be non-material, because it makes the happiness of liberation insignificant, brings about the Lord's appearance, and produces bliss.

Further on, Rūpa Gosvāmī delineates the manifested attributes of one who has attained *bhāva*:

The *anubhāvas* or characteristics of a person who has developed the bud of *bhāva* are as follows:

- tolerance
- not wasting time
- detachment from enjoyment
- pridelessness
- confidence in the Lord's mercy
- longing for the Lord
- taste for chanting the name of the Lord
- attachment to discussing the Lord's qualities
- attachment to living in the abode of the Lord

BRS, 1.3.25-26

Śrī Rūpa then goes on to give one or two examples of each of these characteristics. Many devotees think that this is the perfectional stage from which no one can fall down, and thus, all of one's actions are absolutely perfect and without flaws because you are officially a "pure devotee".

How could one possibly have remaining *anarthas* or even fall down from *bhāva*? It seems impossible to fathom how that could ever be the case. We have already heard the astonishing truth about this from Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, and Viśvanātha Cakravartī.

As we learned in the previous sections in this chapter, even at the exalted transcendental stage of *bhāva*, the stage leading directly to *prema*, there may still be lingering *anarthas*, even though they are essentially neutralized. Let's review what Viśvanātha Cakravartī said about the gradual elimination of *anarthas* in *Mādhurya-kadambinī*:

By continued practice:

With the appearance of *niṣṭhā*, the eradication is pervasive (affecting many *anarthas*).

With the appearance of *bhāva/rati*, the eradication is almost complete.

With the appearance of *prema*, the eradication is complete.

With the attainment of the Lord's association, the eradication is absolute, with no possibility of their reappearance. MK, 3.16

This certainly provides a new perspective on the term, pure devotee. Even at the stages of *bhāva* there may still be *anarthas* present. Only at *prema* are the *anarthas* completely destroyed, and they are absolutely eradicated upon attaining Kṛṣṇa's *darśana* and association.

Even more shocking, as stated before, it is explained in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* how one can still fall down from the stage of *bhāva* and diminish or even destroy one's *bhāva* and possibly even one's *rasa*! This would only happen due to a severe offense against a Vaiṣṇava or Kṛṣṇa, but it can happen, which is precisely why Śrī Rūpa discusses it. Only when one reaches the platform of *prema* is one guaranteed never to fall down. For emphasis, here again is that passage:

Moreover, it should be stated: By an offense against the dearest devotee of the Lord, even real *bhāva* will be destroyed, if the offense is grave. If the offense is medium, the *bhāva* will turn to *bhāvābhāsa*. If the offense is slight, the *bhāva* will become an inferior type. BRS, 1.3.54

Jīva Gosvāmī's Commentary:

By two types of grave offenses – offense to the dearest devotee or to Kṛṣṇa Himself – even real *bhāva* is destroyed. By a medium offense, *bhāva* becomes *bhāvābhāsa* – a shadow of *bhāva*. By a slight offense, the *bhāva* degrades in category. Becoming an inferior type means that there will be degradation in terms of the five *rasas* and the eight stages from *mahābhāva* down to *rati*. Thus, a change in *bhāva* will take place according to the seriousness of the offense.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's Commentary:

If the *aparādha* is slight, the *bhāva* changes type. *Madhura-rati* becomes *dāsyā-rati*. *Dāsyā-rati* becomes *śānta-rati*.

At the end of the chapter on *bhāva-bhakti*, Rūpa Gosvāmī makes surprising and very thought provoking statements.

If some apparent fault is seen in a person who has developed real *bhāva*, one should not be hostile to him, because he has accomplished the goal in all respects. BRS, 1.3.59

From Jīva Gosvāmī's Commentary:

There may be some external bad conduct, but one should not be hostile to him, because by having *bhāva* the person cannot be contaminated by those external actions. Thus, it is said:

Whether one is pure or contaminated, and regardless of one's external situation, simply by remembering the lotus-eyed Personality of Godhead, one can cleanse one's internal and external existence. *Garūḍa Purāṇa*

This person cannot be criticized, because he has accomplished the goal – he has attained *bhāva*.

Thus, it is said in the *Narasimha Purāṇa*: A person who is dedicated completely to the Lord may show externally, serious contamination (but internally he is pure). The full moon, though marked by the figure of a rabbit, is never overcome by darkness. BRS, 1.3.60

Jīva Gosvāmī's Commentary:

A person may show serious contamination. This means that it is seen externally that he performs forbidden activities. However, he shines with internal *bhakti*, which cannot be defeated by anyone (he is incomparable). A particular case, the moon, is introduced to support the general principle. This is called *arthantara-nyāsa*. In the *Hari-vaṁśa*, it is said: the dark spot on the moon is called a rabbit. Though there is a fault in the beauty of the moon, that fault is only superficial.

Let's understand this clearly. After attaining the exalted goal of *bhāva*, which is a ray of *prema* and the beginning of pure *bhakti*, one will still not be completely free from all *anarthas* and possibly even exhibit, "external bad conduct", or "serious contamination", or "perform forbidden activities"! How is this possible? Why didn't Śrī Rūpa say that if you see any such faults ever, then you know this person has *not* reached *bhāva*?

Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, and Viśvanātha Cakravartī have given us the incontrovertible and definitive facts for serious contemplation. Although a *bhāva-bhakta* is pure internally and has reached the preliminary goal, there still may be the external appearance of bad behaviors. This of course is easy fodder for fault-finding offenders (*aparādhīs*), which is clearly why Rūpa Gosvāmī brings up this issue preemptively.

We can't judge a book solely by its cover, and we shouldn't impose or project uninformed, idealistic, unrealistic preconceived ideas on another Vaiṣṇava's level of advancement. One has to be very learned and advanced to correctly understand who is truly advanced and who isn't. Neophyte (*kaniṣṭhā*) devotees are not qualified to properly discern who is an advanced Vaiṣṇava and who isn't. Even most intermediate (*madhyamā*) devotees lack such discrimination, due to limited *sāstric* knowledge and practical realization.

As indicated above by Jīva Gosvāmī, it should be understood that someone who reaches *bhāva* will, in most cases, certainly continue on without impediments to the stage of *prema*. The lingering presence of *anarthas* rarely becomes an issue for such elevated devotees, and they predominantly exhibit very saintly qualities.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains this in *Jaiva-dharma*:

One should not criticize a person in whom true *bhāva* has manifested, even though one may observe some slight fault in his behavior, for once *bhāva* has arisen, the *sādhaka* becomes completely successful in all his endeavors.

Under such circumstances, it is not possible for him to behave sinfully, but if any sinful behavior is sometimes observed, it should be understood in one of two ways. The *mahā-puruṣa-bhakta* may have performed some sinful activity by force of circumstances, but he cannot possibly remain in that condition permanently.

Alternatively, some semblance of sin (*pāpa-ābhāsa*) from his previous life has not been completely destroyed, and is still present even after *bhāva* has arisen in him, although it will be destroyed very soon. One should think like this and not pay any attention to the commonplace faults that may be seen in *bhaktas*, for it is *nāma-aparādha* to do so. The *Nṛsimha Purāṇa* forbids us to absorb our attention in such faults:

Just as the moon is never obscured by darkness, even though covered with black spots, similarly, a person exclusively devoted to Śrī Hari remains glorious, though by appearance he may be wicked and depraved.

It should not be concluded from this instruction that a *bhakta* repeatedly engages in sinful activities. Once a *bhakta* has developed *niṣṭhā* in *bhakti*, he will have no inclination to sin further. However, as long as the material body exists, there is a chance that sinful activity will occur unexpectedly. If a *bhakta* is exclusively devoted, the influence of his *bhajana* immediately burns to ashes all kinds of sins, just as a blazing fire easily consumes a small heap of cotton, and he becomes cautious not to become victimized by any sinful activity again.

All kinds of sinful actions are dissipated at the stage of steady, uninterrupted *ananyā-bhakti*, so it may be clearly understood that those who repeatedly engage in sinful activities have not yet developed this type of *bhakti*. To engage repeatedly and knowingly in sinful activity while practicing *bhakti-yoga* is *nāma-aparādha*, which uproots *bhakti* completely and casts it aside. *Bhaktas*, therefore, keep themselves distant from such offenses. JD, Chapter 22, Pages 533-534

Therefore, it is incorrect to think or say that a particular Vaiṣṇava cannot possibly be a *bhāva-bhakta* or pure devotee solely on the basis of externally observed questionable behavior. It is much deeper than that. At every stage prior to *bhāva*, a *sādhaka* is still dealing with the presence of *anarthas*. Though they gradually become less of an issue as one progresses through the final stages leading to *prema*, *anarthas* are still present up to and including the stage of *bhāva* and sometimes even *prema*.



And, to the contrary, if one is exhibiting good qualities and exemplary behavior, it does not automatically mean that they are a very advanced devotee. As we read in a previous section, Viśvanātha Cakravartī discusses this in relation to steadiness in *bhakti* (*niṣṭhā*), in *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, Fourth Shower:

Elements favorable to *bhakti* (*bhakti-anukūla-vastu-vārtinī*) refer to humility, giving respect to others, friendliness, and mercifulness. However, sometimes steadiness in such qualities may be seen in a self-controlled devotee who has no steadiness in *bhakti*. While elsewhere, steadiness in these qualities may not be perceived in an arrogant devotee who has attained steadiness in *bhakti*.

In spite of this, by the presence or absence of steadiness in *bhakti* itself (*sākṣāt bhakti*), rather than in the qualities of *bhakti*, learned wise men understand the actual presence or absence of *niṣṭhā*, steadiness. Inexperienced perception cannot substantiate the truth.

This is confirmed by the cited verses, *bhaktir bhavati naiṣṭhikī*, with the appearance of *naiṣṭhikī-bhakti*, *tada rajas-tamo-bhāvāḥ... etair anāviddham*, though traces of the qualities born of *rajas* and *tamo guna* may be present, they no longer affect the devotee. MK, 4.3

Obviously, there is a big difference between “acting humble” and truly possessing and manifesting humility. The same applies to all other elevated qualities. The lists of the qualities of advanced Vaiṣṇavas are not simply a compilation of “rules of behavior” to be followed, rather, they are by-products and symptoms of one’s advanced condition in *sādhana-bhakti*.

The final conclusion is that a truly “pure,” “self-realized” devotee is one who is situated on the platform of *prema-bhakti*, the highest goal attainable by *jīvas*. Nevertheless, one on the platform of *bhāva-bhakti* must also be considered a fully self-realized pure devotee, and must be respected as such. At any stage prior to *bhāva*, one is still progressing through the various stages of realizing one’s eternal identity and is still becoming purified of *anarthas* and material conditioning.

Notwithstanding the foregoing conclusions, in India, and especially in Bengal, the term “pure devotee” has not traditionally been used in its strictest technical sense, and such is the case with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s writings. By applying the standards delineated above, we can thus discern more easily when Śrīla Prabhupāda was in fact referring to a *bhāva-bhakta* pure devotee, as opposed to using the term to indicate a fully sincere advanced devotee who is nearing perfection.

The terms “self-realized” and “liberated” have an even broader scope, because they are used to refer to many different advanced sages and *yogīs* who’s activities appear throughout Vedic literature. Such sages and *yogīs* have achieved various levels of *brahman* and *paramātmā* realization, and some, like Nārada and Brahmā are Vaiṣṇavas – either devotees of Viṣṇu in Vaikuṅṭha, or Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. All of them are referred to variously as *paramahāṁsas*, *mahābhāgavatas*, *mahāmunis*, *siddhas*, and so on.

We now understand that those who are devotees of Kṛṣṇa are on the highest platform of *prema* and as such, they are automatically self-realized and liberated, which are actually lesser aspects

of their exalted status. Those who are devotees of Viṣṇu are not quite as exalted as Kṛṣṇa *bhaktas* in terms of their *prema*, but they are still fully liberated and self-realized.

All other transcendentalists are focused on *brahman* or *paramātmā*, placing them further down the line, and depending on their specific positions, they may also be considered liberated and self-realized, but certainly not in the same sense as Vaiṣṇavas. So it is possible to achieve levels of self-realization and liberation without achieving *prema* for Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also used the term self-realized rather broadly, even referring to one's *siddha-deha* as one's "self-realized position", which is certainly a valid interpretation, as we will discover in Chapter 5.

After deliberating carefully on the analysis presented in this section so far, we can now understand that the fallen *gurus* mentioned initially were almost certainly not individuals who had attained the stage of *bhāva*, but then committed some atrocious offense, thus causing their fall down from *bhāva*. Therefore, they were absolutely not pure devotees in the technical and true sense of the term, and nor were they liberated souls or fully self-realized.

To think that so many *gurus* had reached *bhāva-bhakti* and then all of them committed serious *aparādhas*, causing their fall, is highly unlikely. That's not to say that they didn't commit any offenses, just that it's highly unlikely they were all at the stage of *bhāva* if and when they did so. This is not fault-finding, it is an objective analysis of this situation for everyone's edification. There is no value in rubber-stamping people as pure devotees when it isn't genuinely applicable.

The obvious and only possible conclusion is that they were practicing *sādhana-bhakti* and going through the phases of *anartha-nivṛtti* described earlier, and they were then thwarted by various types of *anarthas*, including those arising from *bhakti*, as explained by Viśvanātha Cakravartī in *Mādhurya-kadambinī*:

Next are the *anarthas* arising from *bhakti*. As many weeds grow along with the main plant, along with *bhakti* there appears acquisition of material wealth and other facilities, worship and respect by others, a comfortable position and fame (*lābha, pūjā, pratīṣṭhā*). By their nature, they have the power to influence the heart of the devotee, to expand and retard the growth of the main plant intended for cultivation (*bhakti*). MK, 3.15

Now let's look again at when these specific *anarthas* are eliminated, according to Śrī Viśvanātha:

The eradication of *anarthas* arising from *bhakti* is as follows:

With the performance of *bhajana-kriyā*, eradication is partial.

With the appearance of *niṣṭhā* it is complete.

With the appearance of *ruci* it is absolute.

From this we can thus easily deduce that if these fallen *gurus* were at the stage of *ruci*, the *anarthas* arising from *bhakti* would not have been an issue because their eradication is absolute at that stage. Even at *niṣṭhā*, the eradication is complete, so these *anarthas* would only represent a minor issue and not likely a major stumbling block, what to speak of causing them to give up

their esteemed position and devastating their disciples' faith, and in some cases, even reject the path of *bhakti*. This is certainly very revealing.

But, as we have learned, *anarthas* remain even up to *bhāva*. Understanding these complex issues of the human side of the process of *bhakti* is not always easy, but with the proper knowledge and reasoning we can gain valuable and accurate insight.

Therefore, just because someone presents themselves as a “*guru*”, and has many followers who worship them, it is not a foregone conclusion that they are self-realized pure devotees on the platform of *bhāva* or *prema*. One is certainly free to choose any *guru*, regardless of the *guru*'s level of advancement, but the results are definitely not the same.

We should choose our *dīkṣā* and *śikṣā gurus* very carefully and with full due diligence. At the very least, a *guru* should be at the stage of *niṣṭhā*, and thoroughly understand the knowledge and teachings presented by the *ācāryas* on the subject matters in this book, what to speak of truly being qualified to engage in *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*.

In his *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura describes the spiritual potency of Vaiṣṇavas at various levels of advancement, to help us understand what a *guru* at each level is capable of conveying to their disciples. Those aspiring for initiation (*dīkṣā*) should take serious note of these differences in order to make an informed and wise decision:

Concerning the bestowal of devotional energy by the mercy of the devotee, something should be mentioned. The power of the *prema-bhakta* is unlimited, and thus, the *prema-bhakta*, if he is merciful, can transfer his power to any type of person.

The merciful *bhāva-bhakta* can instill power in the *sādhana-bhaktas* so that they can assume a position similar to his own, and by the strength of his personality, the *bhāva-bhakta* can raise materialistic people who have gained some qualification due to previous deeds to the level of *ruci*.

*Vaidhī* and *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhaktas* can instill faith in materialistic people who have attained qualification by previous deeds, by dint of their teaching and example. CS, Chapter 5, Part 1

What about *uttama-adhikārī* devotees? Where do they stand in the scheme of things? Some devotees may be under the impression that all *uttama-adhikārīs* are also pure, self-realized devotees on the platform of *bhāva* or *prema*. This understanding is not correct. In the chapter on *sādhana-bhakti*, in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Rūpa Gosvāmī states:

There are three types of persons qualified for *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti*: the *uttamā*, the *madhyamā*, and the *kaniṣṭhā*. BRS, 1.2.16

The *uttama-adhikārī* is defined as follows: The person who is skillful in scripture and logic, completely firm in his belief, with deep faith, is considered qualified as an *uttamā* in *vaidhī-bhakti*. BRS, 1.2.17

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

Previously, in defining *vaidhī-bhakti*, it was said that *vaidhī-bhakti* existed where the actions were inspired by the teachings of scripture. Thus, it may be concluded that the root cause of a person's *bhakti* is faith in the content of scriptures. Conviction in the contents of the scriptures is called *śraddhā* or faith. According to the degree of faith in the scriptures, there will be classifications of persons possessing that faith. That is now the topic of discussion for two verses. ... A person who is qualified as above, and has deep faith, is the *uttama-adhikārī*.

By this definition, an *uttama-adhikārī* devotee is still practicing *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti*, and thus is not yet even self-realized, and certainly not on the platform of *bhāva*, since *sādhana* refers to the stage of practice and not perfection. This same verse is quoted in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, along with other verses discussing the three levels of devotees according to faith (CC, 2.22.64-70). Another revealing point to mention is that these three classifications of practitioners do not apply to those who are on the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. No such statements by the *ācāryas* are to be found.

Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes spoke about *uttama-adhikārīs* in the same context as Rūpa Gosvāmī defined them (i.e., advanced *sādhakas*), and then again, at other times, he referred to *uttama-adhikārīs* in the context of being self-realized or pure devotees. Therefore, context is very important to properly understand the intended meanings.

And finally, in consideration of all these details, what does it then mean to be an “advanced devotee”? That's another term that is used quite liberally. It should now be very easy to see that a truly advanced devotee is one who is at the very least at the stage of *niṣṭhā* – firm faith and steadiness in *sādhana* and *bhajana*.

Once *niṣṭhā* is attained, *ruci* and *āsakti* evolve, leading directly to *bhāva*, so one who is immersed in *ruci* or *āsakti*, is an even more “advanced devotee.” Outside of that specific framework, i.e., the three stages before *bhāva*, any other application of the term “advanced devotee” has no basis and doesn't make any sense.

Hopefully, this considered review of this important subject will provide deeper insights into the subtleties of these complex topics. Sorting through and understanding the complexities of this subject is essential to achieving a comprehensive grasp of the entire process. The contemporary Vaiṣṇava community would be well served if more devotees understood this deeper and more complete perspective.

## Chapter 5 – The transition from false ego to eternal ego

### The entire process summarized

This chapter is the heart of this book and the most complex one for a number of reasons. One is that there are many Vaiṣṇavas who don't have a clear understanding of the internal practices of *rāgānugā-bhajana*. In fact, many do not even know about the *siddha-deha*, or if they do, they don't understand it fully. There are a number of reasons for this, not the least of which is an overabundance of misconceptions and blatantly wrong information posing as knowledge, found online for the most part, and of course in various books by contemporary Vaiṣṇava authors.

I will attempt to clear up these misconceptions and reveal directly through the *ācāryas'* teachings the incredible details involved with realizing and manifesting your eternal identity through *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*. The ensuing analyses will focus on *mādhurya-rasa*, because that is the primary focus of all the *ācāryas'* writings, and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's unique and confidential gift to the world.

It is important to understand that the revelation of one's eternal identity takes place directly due to the combined mercy of one's *dīkṣā* and *śikṣā gurus*, one's chosen Vraja mentor, Śrī Rādhā, and of course everything is under the direct control and guidance of Kṛṣṇa, who, as *bhakta-vātsalya*, is responding reciprocally to the sincere intense desires of His loving devotee. This is not a mechanical process in any way. It is completely personal in the most profound sense of that term.

First I'll review the whole process in summary to provide a concise overview of all the stages. Then I'll expand on these details through the *ācāryas'* for the rest of the chapter. While examining the previous *ācāryas'* revelations and explanations, I'll also briefly look at some of the key differences in Śrīla Prabhupāda's writings and resolve those issues.

Here, then, is the summary.

Once you are mercifully blessed with spiritual greed (*lobha*) and begin *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana* in earnest, your spiritual progress accelerates according to the intensity and on-going expansion of that greed, which is directly related to your increasing attachment to Kṛṣṇa. *Anarthas* continue to be diminished and removed as you progress.

Compelled by greed for a specific relationship, at the stage of *niṣṭhā* you learn about and begin to contemplate your *siddha-deha* – the mentally conceived spiritually perfect body and identity that you desire and require for meditating on your involvement (*mānasi-sevā*) within Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's daily pastimes – *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā-smaraṇam*.

Part of the contemplation focuses on the features and qualities of your desired spiritual body, the details of your personality attributes as delineated in *Ujvala-nīlmaṇi*, as well as how you desire to integrate relationally into Rādhā's group, under the guidance of one of Her eight closest companions, the *aṣṭa-sakhīs*.

This internal meditation – *mānasi-sevā* within *līlā-smaraṇam* – slowly and gradually evolves and intensifies throughout the stages of *ruci* and *āsakti*. Externally, your *sādhana* of hearing, chanting, remembering, worshiping, and so on, nourishes your internal *bhajana*. Your *sādhana* and *bhajana* are custom tailored according to your individual unique mood and desires for *rasa* with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Eventually, when the heart and mind are fully enriched by deep *āsakti*, the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* manifests within the heart during chanting and deep unbroken meditation (*anusmṛti* and *samādhi*).

At the stage of *bhāva*, Kṛṣṇa finally reveals Himself directly, and bestows your eternal identity and spiritual form (*svarūpa-siddhi*) exactly according to the desires cultivated during your *bhajana*. Thus, your eternal transcendental relationship with Kṛṣṇa begins, as the seed of *prema*, in the budding manifestation of *bhāva*, begins to grow and expand into fully blossomed *prema-bhakti-rasa*.

As *bhāva* matures into deeper *prema* with its various layers, your remembrance is at the stage of *samādhi* – full absorption without external material consciousness. Internally, you are actually participating directly in Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in your *siddha-svarūpa*, along with your *aṣṭa-sakhī* mentor and your *guru* in his or her eternal spiritual form. But you are still connected to the physical and subtle material bodies, so the perfection is not fully complete.

Because higher levels of *prema* cannot manifest within a material body due to their intensity, at some point, according to the sweet will of Kṛṣṇa, the subtle and physical material bodies will finally and forever be discarded, and you will immediately take birth from the womb of a *nitya-siddha gopī* in Gokula, on a planet in a universe where Kṛṣṇa's manifest eternal pastimes (*prakāṣa-nitya-līlā*) are beginning another cycle.

It is in this final earthly, but transcendental birth, that you acquire and perfect your complete eternal identity and form (*vastu-siddhi*) in Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes, having a mother, a father, brothers, sisters, a husband, friends, and so on. This provides the complete social context for your self-conception (*abhimāna*) in Vraja and your eternal *rasa* with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Your *prema* and *rasa* are fully perfected in that birth, exactly according to the aspirations and loving moods (*bhāvas*) that you cultivated during *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*.

Eventually, according to the eternal cycle, you will seamlessly enter the unmanifested eternal pastimes (*aprakāṣa-nitya-līlā*) in Goloka Vṛndāvana, the highest most confidential realm in all existence. There, in your perfected spiritual form and identity (*vastu-siddhi*), you participate directly in the eternal *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, experiencing ever expanding levels of *prema-bhakti-rasa*, with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and all Their intimate associates.

I have already reviewed the initial stages described above and we are now at the point of studying everything regarding the *siddha-deha*, its *ekadāśa-bhāvas*, and the related practices of *bhajana*. Let us now explore each and every detail comprehensively through a careful review and analysis of the previous *ācāryas'* writings on these matters. This is truly the most exciting and astonishing part of our journey. It is factually the highest and most confidential knowledge of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, originating directly from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu through His associates.

## How is your *rasa* determined?

Before we delve into a detailed analysis of the *siddha-deha* and its *ekadāśa-bhāvas*, we must first have a clear understanding of how our eternal *rasa* is determined. As with most of the topics in this chapter, there are serious misconceptions about this subject that need to be addressed. Fortunately, the *ācāryas* have given more than ample guidance on this subject to provide the necessary clarity for our benefit and progress.

The determination of your eternal *rasa* is based primarily on your own desires and natural inclinations, which are deeply personal. Other contributing factors are impressions (*samskāras*) experienced over the course of many lives, including repeated exposure to various *rasas*. *Bhakti* is a process that generally takes many lifetimes to perfect. You must be thoroughly honest and open about your innermost feelings and aspirations, and pray to your *guru* and Kṛṣṇa for guidance every step along the way.

You can't artificially impose your *rasa*. Nor is it an arbitrary selection based on your whims. The more you read about Kṛṣṇa's *līlās* the more you will become captivated and immersed in them, and eventually a natural spontaneous gravitation toward a particular *rasa* will manifest in your heart. If you have no taste for hearing about Kṛṣṇa's *līlās* then it's not likely that a strong enough attraction will manifest. Your heart goes where you focus your mind.

Discovering your *rasa* is in actuality the awakening of your eternal inherent nature (*svabhāva*), which has been dormant since time immemorial, having had no viable opportunity to manifest itself. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura discusses this in *Jaiva-dharma*:

Vrajanatha: Which type of *rāgānugā-bhakti* do we have the *adhikāra* (qualification) to adopt?

Bābājī: My son, you should scrutinize your own *svabhāva* (the true nature of a thing which forms an essential part of its composition), and then you will see the corresponding type of devotion for which you are qualified. A particular *ruci* (taste) will awaken according to your inherent *svabhāva*, and you should pursue the *rasa* that is indicated by that *ruci*. In order to cultivate that *rasa*, you should follow one of Kṛṣṇa's eternal associates who is perfect in it.

To determine *rasa*, it is only necessary to examine your own *ruci*. If your *ruci* is towards the path of *rāga*, then you should act according to that *ruci*; and as long as an inclination has not awakened for the path of *rāga*, you should simply execute the principles of *vaidhī-bhakti* with firm faith.

Vijaya: Prabhu, I have been studying *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* for a long time, and I listen to *kṛṣṇa-līlā* whenever and wherever I find the opportunity. Whenever I deliberate on *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, a strong *bhāva* arises within my heart to serve the Divine Couple as Lalitā-devī does.

Bābājī: You need not say any more. You are a *mañjarī* (young maidservant) of Lalitā-devī.

...When Vrajanatha saw Vijaya Kumara's spiritual wealth, he folded his hands and humbly said, "My master, whenever I meditate on Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, a desire arises in my heart to serve Him by following in the footsteps of Subala."

Bābājī: Which service do you like?

Vrajanatha: When the calves wander far off to graze, I would very much like to bring them back in the company of Subala. When Kṛṣṇa sits in a place to play upon His flute, I will take the permission of Subala to let the cows drink water, and then I will bring them to *Bhai* (Brother) Kṛṣṇa. This is my heart's desire.

Bābājī: I give you the benediction that you will attain Kṛṣṇa's service as a follower of Subala. You are eligible to cultivate the sentiment of friendship (*sakhya-rasa*). JD, Chapter 21, Pages 514-515

It is easily concluded from the above passage that each devotee should follow their natural inclination based on the spontaneous attraction that arises from hearing Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* over an extended period of time. This attraction to participate in the *līlā* includes a specific associate whose mood and activities represent the ideal example of your desires for participation in the *līlā*. It may be for *sakhya-bhāva*, *mādhurya-bhāva*, *dāsyā-bhāva* or *vātsalya-bhāva*. Whichever *rasa* you are inspired to follow is the best *rasa* for you. It's as simple as that.

It should also be noted that there were no prerequisites mentioned such as, "you have to be completely free from all material desires and *anarthas* before you can know your *rasa*," or, "you have to be very advanced before you can know these things." None of the *ācāryas* ever mention any such criteria when discussing this subject. It is based solely on your sincere and natural attraction for a relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

And this passage from *Jaiva-dharma* also shows that the *guru* does not impose his personal *rasa* on his disciples, because there is no mandate to follow the same *rasa* as your *guru*. None whatsoever. That is definitely not the process recommended by any of our *ācāryas*. The *guru* assists and guides the disciple according to the disciple's inclinations. *Rāgānugā-bhakti* is very personal and there is no rubber stamping involved in these esoteric matters.

On the other hand, it is not surprising if a *guru's* disciples are inclined to the same *rasa* and *bhāvas* as their *guru*, because it is only natural that devotees should seek compatible *gurus* and association in general. But that does not imply in any way that the *guru* is imposing his *rasa* on his disciples, or that they are obligated to follow his *rasa*.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains in *Caitanya-sikṣāmṛta*:

Which *rasa* the soul has is determined by the soul's innermost tendency of taste. When faith in the chanting process arises, according to his taste he will gravitate to his own *rasa*. Determining that *rasa*, the *guru* will give him suitable initiation for carrying out his worship. CS, Chapter 6, Part 5

Another very important point to understand is that determining your *rasa* is not a matter of evaluating which *rasa* is higher or lower. That is a completely mundane consideration and is not supported by any of the *ācāryas*. In the transcendental realm there is no overt perception or consideration of higher and lower *rasas*. Everyone feels that their *rasa* is perfect for them and it



completely fulfills their heart's desires. The concept of higher and lower is only provided to give us a clearer perspective of the variegated nature of the relationships in the spiritual realm.

Many Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas believe that *mañjarī-bhāva* is the highest *rasa*, and the highest service that anyone can attain. Therefore, these devotees conclude that they should aspire to be *mañjarīs* simply because it is the “highest” or “best” *rasa*. This is flawed logic and is also not supported by any of the *ācāryas*. If a natural attraction to be a *mañjarī* isn't there, then it isn't the right choice and should not be superficially imposed.

In the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*, the pre-eminent books on *bhakti-rasa* and *mādhurya-rasa*, Rūpa Gosvāmī does not give any indication whatsoever that being a *mañjarī* is the only *rasa* to be aspired for by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. There is not one direct or implied statement in either book that all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas must be *mañjarīs* and no other *rasa*.

In fact, Śrī Rūpa doesn't even focus on *mañjarīs* as a specific preference, rather, he leaves the door open for each devotee's own unique personal desires and preferences for a relationship in loving service to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The issue of *mañjarī-bhāva* will be explored in greater detail in the following section. Now let's hear more from our *ācāryas*:

From *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

“Kṛṣṇa has many types of devotees – some are servants, some are friends, some are parents, and some are conjugal lovers. Those who are situated in one of these attitudes of spontaneous love according to their choice, are considered to be on the path of spontaneous loving service (*rāga-mārga*). CC, 2.22.161

Jīva Gosvāmī also confirms the qualifications for the awakening of one's *rasa* in his *Bhakti-sandarbhā*:

For this reason we will now discuss *rāgānugā-bhakti*, the practice of devotion following in the wake of the moods of natural affection. When a person develops a taste for the aforesaid specific *rāga* [i.e., any of the four major *rasas*], even though that *rāga* itself has not arisen in her or him, the heart becomes like a crystal, shining as it reflects the rays of the moon of that *rāga*.

By hearing about this *rāga* from scripture or from one's teacher, one develops a taste for the actions of the *rāgatmika* associates also, that are expressions of this *rāgatmika-bhakti*. Then by adhering to the *rāga* of a particular associate of the Lord, according to one's taste, one executes devotion, which is called *rāgānugā*. BS, Anuccheda 310

Because the process of *bhakti* takes many lifetimes to perfect, we can thus understand that a strong natural attraction towards a specific *rasa* in one's current life indicates many *samskāras* associated with that *rasa* over the course of many previous lives. This is explained in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

These five types of *rati* [i.e., the *rati* or *bhāva* associated with each of the five *rasas*] progressively become more blissful by increasing tastes. The particular taste arises in a devotee according to his previous experiences. BRS, 2.5.38

Jīva Gosvāmī's Commentary:

But what determines who takes up which type of *rati*? Is it decided by having no impressions of a particular *rati* from previous lives, by having an impression of one type of *rati* from previous lives, or by having impressions of many types of *rati*?

In the first option – absence of impressions – *rati* cannot occur at all, because no taste could arise. In the case of persons having impressions of many types of *rati*, a particular *rati* could not manifest prominently because conflicting tastes would result in the improper manifestation of *rasa* (*rasābhāsa*). Therefore, impressions of only one type carried from previous lives produce the specific taste.

Though not being in a position to perceive the depth of that *rasa*, one can confirm its identity by comparing scriptural descriptions of *rasas* with one's own inclinations, and by inference through seeing how *rasas*, different from one's own *rasa*, either nourish or fail to nourish the total ingredients.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

Among the various tastes such as sweet, sour and bitter, a particular person has a particular liking because of previous impressions. Because of impressions from a past life of a particular *rasa*, such as *dāśya*, in this life also, the person has that taste alone and not others, by the mercy of a great devotee with a similar taste. This is the case for the two types of *dāśya* and the other three higher *rasas*.

In *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, Rūpa Gosvāmī and Jīva Gosvāmī explain this as well:

Being fixed as a *gopī*:

Recognition of oneself as a *gopī* spontaneously produces *rati*. It quickly produces strong *rati* for Kṛṣṇa alone, although He has not been heard of or seen. UN, 14.38

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

Like sugarcane and its sweetness, this qualification for *madhura-rasa* is present from birth. This is produced by concentration of previous impressions of the particular devotees.

In *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes in his commentary in Chapter 15:

When the spiritual master is ascertaining the aspirant's pure personal inclinations, the aspirant should also help the spiritual master by speaking his mind about his own preferences. As long as he has not clearly established the disciple's inclinations, the *guru*'s directions are not flawless.

The inclinations that have been shaped by one's meritorious deeds, through both this and previous lives, are called *ruci* or taste. This particular inclination, however, is integral to the soul. Should a person not have a natural inclination for *śṛṅgāra-rasa*, (*mādhurya-rasa*) but for servitude or friendship, then he should be instructed accordingly; if not, there will be undesirable consequences.

It is widely known in Gauḍīya tradition that the great devotee Śyāmānanda was at first unaware of his personal *siddha ruci* or permanent devotional propensity. His *guru* thus advised him to take up *sakhya-rasa*, the mood of friendship.

Later, however, by the grace of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, Śyāmānanda recognized which kind of worship truly attracted him (*mādhurya-rasa*). Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teaching is that every practitioner should be assessed according to both aptitude and qualifications. HNC, 15.73-74

After studying the above statements of the *ācāryas*, it should be abundantly clear beyond any doubt that everyone should follow their own spontaneous inclinations towards the *rasa* that manifests naturally in their hearts. That natural inclination is nourished over many lifetimes. There is no mandate or obligation to follow one particular *rasa* over another, due to inferior or superior considerations.

### **Is *mañjarī-bhāva* the highest and only *rasa* for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas?**

As previously mentioned, many Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas promote *mañjarī-bhāva* as the highest and best *rasa*. In some cases these devotees say it is the only *rasa* to aspire for, or that it is the only way to enter *mādhurya-rasa*. It's almost as if it's considered mandatory. Supposedly, there are even members of Advaita *ācārya*'s lineage who claim that *He* is a *mañjarī*, when everyone knows *He* is an incarnation of Mahā-*viṣṇu*!

Although it may be a bit risky to include this section, because there is the strong likelihood that I will be criticized by fervent *mañjarī* proponents, I am compelled to do so on the basis of an unbiased objective review and analysis of our *ācāryas*' writings, which will provide incredibly revealing information on this subject. To be clear, my intent in this section is to examine what the *ācāryas* have written without any bias. I am not personally promoting any particular *rasa* over another.

It has already been established conclusively in the previous section how your *rasa* is revealed through natural spontaneous attraction and personal preferences. And, as stated before, there is no mention or indication by Rūpa Gosvāmī of the superiority or preference for being a *mañjarī*, in either *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* or *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* – the pre-eminent books on *bhakti-rasa* – as taught to him directly by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. One would certainly expect to find any such preferences within those books.

Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī's *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*,<sup>1</sup> which will be discussed further on in this chapter, is focused solely on developing one's *rasa* as a *mañjarī*. This is no surprise, because the knowledge therein comes directly from Lord Caitanya's most intimate associate, Svarūpa Dāmodara, who is Lalitā, under whom many primary *mañjarīs* (Rūpa-mañjarī, Rati-mañjarī, and so on) serve in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. It makes complete logical sense. It is interesting to note however, that Dhyānacandra never uses the specific term, *mañjarī-bhāva*, nor do the other *ācāryas*. He does use the term *gopī-bhāva*, which is a general and all-inclusive term.

It is well known that most of our Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* are *mañjarīs*. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, who is Kamalā-mañjarī, even revealed his personal *ekadāśa-bhāvas* in *Jaiva-dharma* and *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*. As is to be expected, they were all speaking according to their own experiences and realizations, which is precisely how *ācāryas* teach.

The analysis in this section will focus primarily on *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*. In *Jaiva-dharma*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes the following about the five types of *sakhīs* in Rādhā's group, as part of the summary of *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* being discussed between the main characters.

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: There are two kinds of *svapakṣā-sakhīs* (Rādhā's *sakhīs*). Those whose affection for Kṛṣṇa is the same as their affection for their *yūtheśvarīs* are *sama-snehā*, and those whose affection for Kṛṣṇa and their *yūtheśvarīs* is not equal are *asama-snehā*.

Vijaya: Who are the *sakhīs* who have *asama-snehā*?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: There are two types of *asama-snehā sakhīs*. Some have more affection for their *yūtheśvarīs* than for Kṛṣṇa, while other *sakhīs* think, "I am the maidservant of Hari." They do not mix with other groups, and they have complete affection for their *yūtheśvarīs*, but they have still more affection for Kṛṣṇa.

Alternatively, those *sakhīs* who think, "I am the maidservant of my *sakhīs*," and who have more affection for their *sakhīs* than for Kṛṣṇa are called *sakhī-snehā-adhikā*.

Vijaya: Who are they?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: Among five types of *sakhīs*, those who have more affection for Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-snehā-adhikā*) are simply called *sakhī*. The *prāṇa-sakhīs* (prominent *mañjarīs*) and *nitya-sakhīs* (*mañjarīs*) are both *sakhī-snehā-adhikā*, for they have more affection for their *sakhī* (Rādhā).

Vijaya: Who are the *sama-snehā sakhīs*?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: Those who have equal affection for both Kṛṣṇa and their *yūtheśvarīs* are *sama-snehā*.

Vijaya: Who are the best among all the *sakhīs*?

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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the Appendix for more information on Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī and Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī.

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: The best of all are those who consider themselves Śrī Rādhā's nearest and dearest, although they love both Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Kṛṣṇa equally. They are called *priya-sakhīs* and *parama-preṣṭha-sakhīs*. JD, Chapter 34, Page 736

The “best of all” the *sakhīs* as stated by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura are the *priya-sakhīs* and the *parama-preṣṭha-sakhīs* (*aṣṭa-sakhīs*), not the *mañjarīs*. In *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī provides an analysis of the relative positions among the five types of Rādhā's *sakhīs*, which was the original basis for Śrīla Bhaktivinoda's statements:

In Rādhā's group, which is the best of all, there are beautiful women decorated with all good qualities, who completely attract Kṛṣṇa. The *sakhīs* of Rādhā are of five types: *sakhī*, *nitya-sakhī*, *prāṇa-sakhī*, *priya-sakhī* and *parama-preṣṭha-sakhī*. UN, 4.49-50

The *sakhīs* are women like Kusumikā, Vindhyā, and Dhaniṣṭhā. The *nitya-sakhīs* include Kastūrī and Maṇi-mañjarikā.. UN, 4.51v

The *prāṇa-sakhīs* include Śaśimukhī, Vāsanti, and Lāsikā. All these three types generally have the same qualities as Rādhā. UN, 4.52

From Śrī Viśvanātha's commentary:

*Imāḥ* means the *sakhīs*, *nitya-sakhīs* and *prāṇa-sakhīs*. They are generally almost equal to Rādhā in terms of *prema*, beauty and good qualities. This means that they are not completely equal to Her. Those who are truly equal (to Rādhā) are the *priya-sakhīs*, and *parama-preṣṭha-sakhīs*.

Though there are five types, one should understand that there are also two types, those with equal affection (*sama-snehā*) and those with unequal affection (*asama-snehā*). This will be explained later.

“If you say they are almost equal, then the *sakhīs*, *nitya-sakhīs* and *prāṇa-sakhīs* are somewhat inferior to Rādhā. This would mean they are servants as defined by the phrase “*tulya-rūpa-guṇā sakhyaḥ kiñcin nyūnās tu dāsikāḥ*: the servants are slightly less in qualities than the friends, whose qualities and form equal the queens.” (UN, 3.8)

That is not so. This statement concerning servants says they are somewhat equal or similar. This means that they are somewhat less than leaders. Thus, “being less” is of two grades. Similarity of qualities may be suitable or unsuitable for gaining respect. Those whose qualities are suitable, who have equal qualities by their nature are *sakhīs*. Those whose qualities are unsuitable, and have fewer qualities by their nature are servants. Thus, there is no fault. UN, 4.52, Commentary

Once again, clarity and understanding that is impossible to interpret any other way than as presented. Moving on, in Chapter 8 of *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, additional differences are explained in relation to the grades of *prema* of these five groups of Rādhā's *sakhīs*, as well as their relationships to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This is a long excerpt, but the knowledge presented is

invaluable and is best comprehended in its entirety. It also provides a look into the complexities and inner workings of *mādhurya-rasa* as presented in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*.

Those who have equal love (*sama-snehā*) for Kṛṣṇa and the group leader (Rādhā), who identify themselves as belonging to Rādhā, are *parama-preṣṭha-sakhīs* and *priya-sakhīs*. UN, 8.137

From Śrī Viśvanātha's commentary:

...”If there are three types of *sakhīs* – with more affection for Kṛṣṇa, more affection for Rādhā and equal affection for both – then why was it explained previously that there are five types? There are two varieties corresponding to their amount of love for those with more affection for the group leader (*prāṇa-sakhī* and *nitya-sakhī*) and for those with equal affection (*parama-preṣṭha-sakhī* and *priya sakhī*).

Why is there only one variety (*sakhī*) for those with more affection for Kṛṣṇa? There should be two varieties also for those with more affection for Kṛṣṇa. Do those *sakhīs* also not have grades of *prema*? And if those with equal affection are the best, then those with more affection either for the group leader or for Kṛṣṇa should be equally inferior.

Why are those with more affection for Kṛṣṇa, such as Kusumikā and Vindhya, placed at the bottom? If you say that Kṛṣṇa is attracted to those who have more affection for the group leader, because She is dear to Him, then Rādhā should be attracted to those who have more attraction for Kṛṣṇa, because He is dearest to Her. If you say that the names (i.e., the five types of *sakhīs*) are given by Kṛṣṇa because He is satisfied with them, why cannot Rādhā give the names?”

**One should understand the conclusion to these points. *Sakhīs*, *nitya-sakhīs*, *prāṇa-sakhīs*, *priya-sakhīs*, and *priya-narma-sakhīs* actually all have successively greater *prema* for both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This is the significance of those names (i.e., the five types of *sakhīs*).**

Those who have more affection for Kṛṣṇa are the *sakhīs*. The *nitya-sakhīs* (*mañjarīs*) have more affection than them for both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa but they are called *sakhīs* with more affection for the group leader because they have slightly more affection for Rādhā than for Kṛṣṇa (*asama-snehā*).

The *prāṇa-sakhīs* (principal *mañjarīs*) have more affection for both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa than the *nitya-sakhīs*, and slightly more affection for Rādhā. They are also called *sakhīs* with more affection for the group leader.

Those who have more affection for both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa than the *prāṇa-sakhīs* but also have equal affection for both are the *priya-sakhīs*. They are called *sakhīs* with equal affection (*sama-snehā*).

The *priya-narma-sakhīs* (*parama-preṣṭha-sakhīs*, i.e., *aṣṭa-sakhīs*) have even more affection than the *priya-sakhīs* for both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, but equal affection for both. They are also called *sakhīs* with equal affection.

“Let that be. I do not object to the successively higher statuses. But just as those with more affection for the *sakhī* (Rādhā) have two varieties – *nitya-sakhīs* and *prāṇa-sakhīs*, so those with more affection for Kṛṣṇa should have two varieties – *sakhī* and *snigdha-sakhī*. Why not? Because of this, I am bewildered.”

That is true. It has previously been explained in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* that attaining the position of a *gopī* cannot take place without *rāgānugā-bhakti*. And without following after the *nitya-siddha gopīs*, *rāgānugā* cannot be perfected. *Rāgānugā* means to follow after those *gopīs* who have *rāga*. Those three types who follow the *nitya-siddhas* attain perfection like the *nitya-siddha gopīs* but they exist eternally in a slightly lesser position than the *nitya-siddha gopīs* that they follow.

Having loyalty to the group leaders and their *sakhīs*, according to their own desires, the three types who follow the *parama-preṣṭha-sakhīs* with equal affection for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa become *priya-sakhīs* with a similar type of affection.

The three types who follow the *prāṇa-sakhīs* (principal *mañjarīs*) with more affection for Rādhā become situated eternally as *nitya-sakhīs* (*mañjarīs*) with more affection for Rādhā. UN, 8.137, Commentary

Viśvanātha Cakravartī’s explanations are astonishing, incredibly revealing and conclusive, to say the least. There is absolutely no ambiguity whatsoever. One of the key points made in Śrī Viśvanātha’s commentary above is: “*Sakhīs*, *nitya-sakhīs*, *prāṇa-sakhīs*, *priya-sakhīs*, and *priya-narma-sakhīs* actually all have successively greater *prema* for both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This is the significance of those names (i.e., the five types of *sakhīs*).” Of course this does not mean that *sādhana-siddha jīvas* who become *priya-sakhīs* will be greater than the *nitya-siddha mañjarīs* like Rūpa, Rati, and the others.

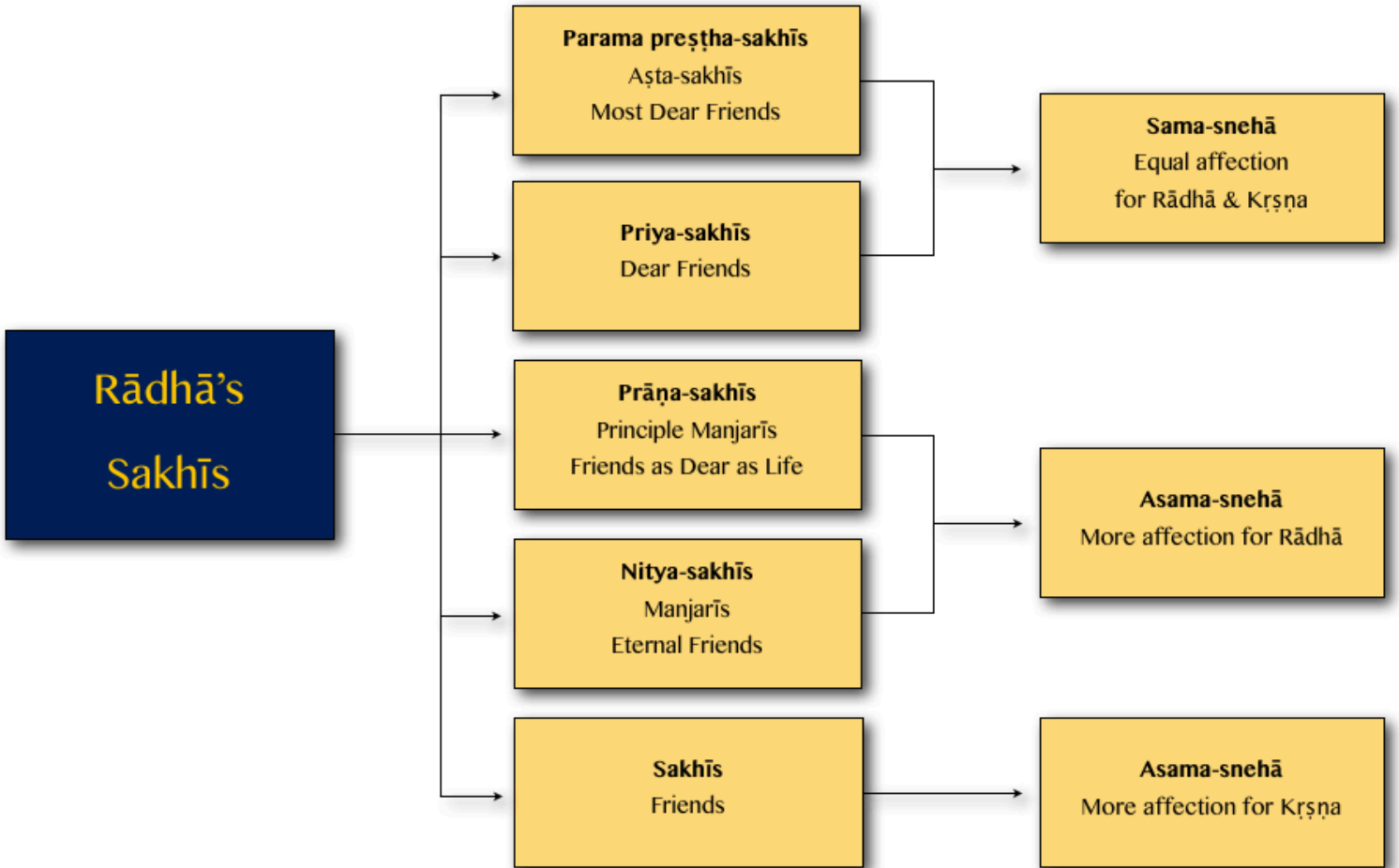
*Ujjvala-nīlamanī* is the quintessential text on *mādhurya-rasa* and Viśvanātha Cakravartī has given us invaluable deep insight into Śrī Rūpa’s presentation. The conclusions are abundantly and unequivocally clear regarding the hierarchical disposition of Rādhā’s various *sakhīs*. There are differences in levels of equality and *prema*, and the *mañjarīs* (*nitya-sakhīs*) are clearly not the topmost of all the *sakhīs*. *Priya-sakhīs* have more *prema* for, and equality with, Rādhā than the *mañjarīs*. Shocking to some, though this may be, it is nonetheless the truth of the matter.

But even more importantly, we can now understand from Śrī Viśvanātha’s commentary that there are in fact, two types of *gopī-bhāva* or *sakhī-bhāva* which *rāgānugā-sādhakas* may aspire for and attain – either as a *nitya-sakhī mañjarī* following a *prāṇa-sakhī*, or as a *priya-sakhī* following any of the *aṣṭa-sakhīs*, specifically in the mood of *sama-snehā* – with equal affection for both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Thus, *jīvas* who have attained perfection through *rāgānugā-bhakti* (*sādhana-siddhas*) gain entrance into *mādhurya-rasa* either as *nitya-sakhīs* (*mañjarīs*) or as *priya-sakhīs*. They accomplish this by following the *nitya-siddha sakhīs*, the eternally liberated *sakhīs* who are actually direct expansions (*kāya-vyūha*) of Rādhā, namely the *prāṇa-sakhīs* and the *parama-preṣṭha-sakhīs*. No *ācāryas* have advised following the *sakhīs*, the first group of the five types.

This is essential knowledge for all devotees who aspire to enter *mādhurya-rasa* as part of Rādhā's group. This is the complete truth of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's gift of *ujjvala-rasa*.

The conclusions so far are that there is clearly no support whatsoever for the idea that being a *mañjarī* is the “only” *rasa* available for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas who want to enter *mādhurya-rasa*, or even that it is the preferred *rasa* because you are part of a particular Vaiṣṇava group, which is an incorrect idea to begin with. Nor are *mañjarīs* the highest or best among Rādhā's *sakhīs* by the different measures presented – equality with Rādhā and *prema* for Her and Kṛṣṇa. Viśvanātha Cakravartī's statements are crystal clear. And keep in mind that these conclusions (*siddhantas*) are being presented by our *ācāryas* who, ironically, are all *mañjarīs*!



There are still other important points to be clarified. It is often stated that one of the special features of the *mañjarīs* is that only they experience Rādhā's emotions directly because of their intimate relationship with Her. But the truth is that it is not just the *mañjarīs* who have these vicarious experiences. All of Rādhā's *sakhīs* experience this astonishing phenomenon. In the following verses, the original Sanskrit is simply “*sakhīs*” and not specifically “*mañjarīs*.”



From Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Govinda-līlāmṛta*:

Just as the moon enlivens the lilies, so Kṛṣṇa is the bright moon that enlivens the lily-like hearts of the residents of Vṛndāvana. His pleasure-giving potency is personified in Rādhā, who is like a vine with fruits of *prema*. Her girlfriends (*sakhīs*) are the unlimited branches, leaves and flowers that expand out from her self and are thus equal to her.

For this reason, when that winding vine of love is watered with the heavenly potion of Kṛṣṇa's sporting activities, then its leaves and flowers, the *sakhīs*, find hundreds of times more pleasure than if they were themselves to be sprinkled. There is nothing unusual about this. GL, 10.16

If Kṛṣṇa should touch Śrīmatī Rādhārānī, then lo and behold Her *sakhīs* start to tremble, they sweat, their bodily hairs stand on end, and tears well up in their eyes. And if Kṛṣṇa should carefully sip the spirituous liquor of Rādhā's lips, it is they who become intoxicated! This is truly something wonderful. GL, 11.137

The conclusion is absolutely clear – *all* of Rādhā's *sakhīs* experience Her emotions related to Kṛṣṇa, not just the *mañjarīs*. All of Rādhā's girlfriends are intimately connected to Her and experience the unlimited waves of Her *prema* for Kṛṣṇa, according to the nature of their personal relationship with Her and the depth of their *prema*, as was explained by Viśvanātha Cakravartī. This is the highest confidential realm that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu opened to us all. He also experienced the waves of Rādhā's *prema*.

As discussed in Chapter 3, those devotees desiring to be part of Rādhā's group practice the type of *kāmānugā-bhakti* called *tat-tad-bhāvecchātmika-bhakti*:

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* commentary:

...*Tat-tad-bhāvecchātmika* means *bhakti* whose inspiration is the desire to taste the special *bhāva* in relation to Kṛṣṇa possessed by a particular woman of Vraja (Rādhā), whom one holds dear. This should be understood to be superior to the previous type. It is the chief type of *kāmānugā-bhakti*. BRS, 1.2.297-298 Commentary

Because we now know that aspiring devotees can become either *priya-sakhīs* or *nitya-sakhīs*, **this means that both of them are following Rādhā's *bhāvas* (*tat-tad-bhāvecchātmika-bhakti*) and thus, both of these types of *sakhīs* will experience Rādhā's *bhāvas* as part of their experiences of *prema* and *rasa*.** This is the correct and final conclusion (*siddhanta*). Any other conclusions should be considered unacceptable speculation, since they have no substantiation whatsoever in these writings by our *ācāryas*.

Moving on, supposedly, one of the key indicators of the superiority of the *mañjarīs*, as stated by their proponents, is that the *mañjarīs* get to witness the most intimate conjugal pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa by peeking through the openings in the private cottages, as described by Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī in his *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*:

I take shelter of the handmaidens of the Queen of Vrindavan, led by Śrī Rūpa-mañjarī, who lovingly satisfy her by offering her betel nuts and other condiments, massaging her feet, bringing fragrant water and arranging trysts with her lover. Having thus become most dear to her, they are allowed to enter the scene of the Divine Couple's most intimate affairs without the slightest discomfiture, a reward not given even to Her dearest friends. VVS, 38

Notwithstanding that statement, Viśvanātha Cakravartī also describes this in his *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* commentary, but he simply refers to *sakhīs* and not specifically *mañjarīs*:

An example of *līlā-vilāsa*:

When Kṛṣṇa strongly embraced her, Rādhā scratched him with her nails. When He tried to kiss her, She blocked him with her arms. When Kṛṣṇa pulled her cloth, She struck Him with a water lily. He obtained greater joy from this than from union. UN, 15.254

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Sakhīs* who gazed through the lattice holes relish the *līlā-vilāsa* of the couple. Two verses are given as examples.

Nonetheless, there is no disagreement that these are unique and remarkable aspects of the young *mañjarīs'* relationships with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This is a wonderful ornament of their *prema*. But in light of our expanded understanding so far, this can now be seen in its proper context. It is certainly not overwhelming and conclusive evidence of their superiority or higher level status among Rādhā's *sakhīs*. The *priya-sakhīs* also have opportunities for wonderful confidential pastimes that are unavailable to the *mañjarīs*, but it is beyond the scope of this discussion to expand on that here. These details are found in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* and the *līlā* books.

The *priya-sakhīs* are of different ages and relational moods towards Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, according to their individual dispositions and desires. They do not share the same attributes as the *mañjarīs*. As Rūpa Gosvāmī reveals in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, *mādhurya-rasa* displays unlimited variety, especially when it comes to Kṛṣṇa's *gopīs*. In *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* he describes the 360 different types of Kṛṣṇa's lovers. And then he says there are many more types than that, but he didn't describe them for fear of increasing the size of his treatise!

It is said that the *mañjarīs* never desire to have direct intimate encounters with Kṛṣṇa, due to their particular mood of having greater love for Rādhā than Kṛṣṇa. The fact that most of them are pre-adolescents (11-13) is also a contributing factor. This is because they typically display the attributes of very shy, innocent, giggling young girls, who relish associating with Rādhā and all of Her girlfriends, the older *sakhīs*, like the *priya-sakhīs* and the *aṣṭa-sakhīs*. (14-16).

Besides direct personal service to Rādhā, the *mañjarīs'* happiness is derived from seeing Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa together by their cooperative arrangements, and those moods and endeavors are also shared equally by all of Rādhā's *sakhīs*. All of Rādhā's *sakhīs* experience conjugal pleasure vicariously through Rādhā and some of them also experience it directly with Kṛṣṇa, as revealed in the *līlā* books. Only the *mañjarīs* prefer to abstain.

This does not imply that the *mañjarīs* therefore have greater *prema* than other *gopīs*, nor does it make them better than the other *sakhīs*. Rather, it makes them astonishingly and inconceivably unique, in light of Kṛṣṇa's endless amorous desires and all of the other *gopīs*' overwhelmingly powerful *samarthā-rati* for Kṛṣṇa in *ujjala-rasa*. And considering that all the *gopīs* are obsessed with fulfilling Kṛṣṇa's conjugal desires and giving Him pleasure, the *mañjarīs* stand apart in this regard. They are truly remarkable because of that.

However, in Vraja, there are no hard and fast rules regarding amorous affairs. Kṛṣṇa's desires are pre-eminent and His ability to fulfill them is supreme. From *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*:

Arranging *sakhīs* to meet Kṛṣṇa by having them deliver written messages:

O violent girl! Give up this letter-carrying. O crooked eyes! Why do you look at me with that crooked glance? Read that letter written by Rādhā. In this hut in the grove there is a soft, fragrant couch made of flowers. This flower bed is calling you to lie down upon it through the loudly buzzing bees.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

Rasāla-mañjarī says, "I am Rādhā's letter carrier. Why are you looking at me with lust? The messengers offer their lives, not their bodies. You know the nature of the messenger." Kṛṣṇa replies with this verse. Give up this business of carrying letters. O violent woman! What irrelevant words are you speaking? You are not a messenger. If you do not give the letter, then read aloud the letter written by Rādhā. I have not done anything devious. "Coming to you, Rasāla-mañjarī will reveal the whole letter. Today O Kṛṣṇa, lover of the forest, do not violate my *dharma*."

When you mention your friend Rasāla-mañjarī (mango bud) and that I am a lover of the forest, there is another meaning. That you should consider. *Dharma* can also be taken as *adharmā* by *sandhi* rules. Thus your statement is unclear. But *dharma* is the quality of Her messengers and therefore all Her followers have *prema* for me. The meaning is true. **Then, having defeated her, he took her hand and led her to the bed.** UN, 8.66

In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Rāmānanda Rāya describes to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu the nature of the *sakhīs*' relationship with Rādhā, and once again there is no specific focus on *mañjarīs* – quite the opposite:

Although the *sakhīs* do not possess even the slightest desire to enjoy themselves with Śrī Kṛṣṇa directly, still Rādhikā makes an active effort that enables them to meet with Him. She sends the *gopīs* to Kṛṣṇa, employing a great variety of clever ruses, as well as inspiring His heart with a desire to meet them. At such times, She enjoys a happiness ten million times greater than the happiness She experiences when directly meeting with Him.

Because the internal consciousness of Śrī Rādhikā and the *gopīs* is pervaded by *viśuddha-sattva*, or pure spiritual existence, Śrīmatī Rādhikā always remains engaged in continuously bestowing happiness upon the *gopīs* [Her *sakhīs*], and vice versa. They are ever absorbed in

nourishing or expanding the sentiments of *rasa*. Upon seeing their mutual exchanges, Śrī Kṛṣṇa becomes most satisfied. CC, 2.8.211-213

At this point there should be absolute understanding regarding Rādhā's *sakhīs* (including the *mañjarīs*) and their relative positions within Her group. The explanations from the *ācāryas* that have been presented so far have challenged and refuted all of the commonly held beliefs about the *mañjarīs*, that were in fact, not entirely accurate, nor substantiated by the *ācāryas*.

Please be very clear that these conclusions do not diminish the glory of the *mañjarīs* in any way. Rather, they establish the correct understanding (*siddhānta*) of their unique and exalted status, free from unwanted speculation and unfounded bias. We should always seek the truth in all matters, especially confidential subjects like these. As usual, our *ācāryas* have provided that truth, pure and simple.

Another relevant topic related to this issue is the notion of Rūpānugās versus *rāgānugās*. Many devotees subscribe to the idea that there are two branches of followers of *rāgānugā-bhakti* as presented by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. There are those who follow the general path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* and are thus known as *rāgānugās*, and those who specifically follow Rūpa Gosvāmī with a desire to be *mañjarīs* in Rūpa-mañjarī's group, and they are known as Rūpānugās. These devotees even go so far as to proclaim that the highest followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are Rūpānugās, and that no one can enter *mādhurya-rasa* unless they are Rūpānugās. They also say that those desiring *rasas* other than *mādhurya* are not true Rūpānugās.

Based on the knowledge we have examined in this section, we can now conclude with certainty that this idea is patently incorrect and is factually completely against the conclusions presented by our *ācāryas*, especially Rūpa Gosvāmī. After careful study of the books used herein for reference, I have found no such evidence from any of these *ācāryas* to substantiate this specific notion. The term, Rūpānugā, is not even used in their principal books. There are certainly many prayers by various *ācāryas* wherein they express their own personal desires to be part of Rūpa-mañjarī's group in Vraja, but none of them ever say that only followers of Rūpa-mañjarī can enter *mādhurya-rasa*.

Examining Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements regarding Rūpānugās reveals that in every single instance he has indicated that being a Rūpānugā means following Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī as *sādhakas*. In other words, a Rūpānugā is one who follows the external examples and principles established in Rūpa Gosvāmī's teachings in terms of one's *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*. It is definitely not related specifically to a desire to be a *mañjarī* in Rūpa-mañjarī's group. No such connection is ever made by Śrīla Prabhupāda or by any *ācāryas* whose books we are studying.

In the Preface of *Nectar of Devotion* Śrīla Prabhupāda explains this:

The present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is also based on the authority of Srila Rūpa Gosvāmī Śrīla Prabhupāda. We are therefore generally known as Rūpānugās, or followers in the footsteps of Srila Rūpa Gosvāmī Śrīla Prabhupāda. NOD, Preface

Viśvanātha Cakravartī also explains this in *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*:

How to follow in the footsteps of the people of Vraja? In one's physical body one follows in the footsteps of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and other saints that lived in Vraja, and in the mentally conceived spiritual body one follows in the footsteps of Śrīmatī Rūpa-mañjarī and the other eternal associates of Kṛṣṇa. RVC, 1.11

Therefore, the “Rūpa” in Rūpānugā refers directly to Rūpa Gosvāmī and not to his Vraja identity as Rūpa-mañjarī. Thus, regardless of one's desired *rasa* – *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* or *mādhurya* – if one is following Rūpa Gosvāmī's teachings and principles on *rāgānugā-bhakti*, one is considered to be a Rūpānugā. The notion of being a Rūpānugā is used primarily and specifically to distinguish Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu from Vaiṣṇavas in other lineages. These are the facts and the truth in this matter.

Yet another important side issue associated with this topic is that many devotees assume that all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* or *gurus* must be *mañjarīs*. This is, in part, connected to the Rūpānugā misunderstanding just mentioned. Most devotees try to substantiate this idea by referring to the *Śrī Guruvāṣṭakam* prayers by Viśvanātha Cakravartī, wherein verse six states, *nikuñja yuno rati keli siddhyai*, which describes the spiritual master as being, “expert at assisting the *gopīs* in making tasteful arrangements for the perfection (*siddhyai*) of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa's conjugal loving affairs (*rati-keli*) within the groves (*nikuñja*) of Vṛndāvana.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda was asked this same question, and in a letter to his disciple Jayapataka Svāmi. He replied:

“The prayers offered by Viśvanātha Cakravartī to his spiritual master have a special significance. His spiritual master was one of the assistant *gopīs* (*mañjarīs*), so the prayer was offered like that. On the whole, the spiritual master is an agent of Krishna. But either he is assistant to the *gopīs* or assistant to the cowherd boys.”

It's hard to interpret this statement as anything other than an indication of Śrīla Prabhupāda's inclinations towards *sakhya-rasa*. If he was a *mañjarī*, why would he bother to mention about being an assistant to the cowherd boys? None of the other *ācāryas* have mentioned anything like that in this context.

The most significant point, however, is that Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly indicated that this verse was written by Viśvanātha Cakravartī specifically for *his guru* – and not for all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *gurus* for eternity. This is a very important fact that most devotees seem to miss about this verse. It is not an edict.

The *priya-narma-sakhā* cowherd boys are Kṛṣṇa's most intimate friends, and they also directly assist in arranging these very intimate affairs. There is nothing they don't know or understand about these highly confidential matters. From *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*:

The *priya-narma-sakhā* knows the most intimate pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, covets the desire for Kṛṣṇa meeting the *gopīs*, and is the best among all the dear friends of Kṛṣṇa. In Gokula, Subala and Arjuna are *priya-narma-sakhās*. UN, 2.13

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

The *priya-narma-sakhās* have the desire that Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* meet each other. That is the meaning of their *sakhī-bhāva*. By this, their masculine sentiments are covered.

The *rati* of the *narma-vayasyas* (*priya-narma-sakhās*) extends to *anurāga*, but among them, Subala's *rati* extends to *bhāva* (*mahā-bhāva*). UN, 14.233

It is thus not a foregone conclusion that every Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* will be or must be a *mañjarī*, even though many, if not most of them are. The vivid case in point is Śrīla Prabhupāda, where all available evidence overwhelming points to him being a *priya-narma-sakhā* – a cowherd boy in *sakhya-rasa*, who assists Kṛṣṇa in His *mādhurya-līlā*.

Of course, I do realize that, having made that statement, I've just opened Pandora's box so to speak. There are many devotees and disciples who assume, or have been led to believe, that Śrīla Prabhupāda must also be a *mañjarī*.

Several years ago, my Godsister, Jadurānī Dāsī (Śyāmarānī) wrote an article in response to my Godbrother Tripurāri Svāmī's article on this subject. He has also discerned that Śrīla Prabhupāda is a *priya-narma-sakhā*, whereas Jadurānī is adamant that Prabhupāda can only be a *mañjarī*.

However, it's not in our best interest to divert the current discussion with a lengthy sidetrack because it isn't directly relevant. Instead, I've written a detailed response to Jadurānī's extensive article, countering all of her arguments with solid *śāstric* backup, and it is in a separate pdf file that was sent along with this book for readers' reference and review.

To conclude this section, I am not aware of any books by our *ācāryas* wherein there are contradictions to what has been presented here about this topic. The above analysis of our *ācāryas'* writings has provided conclusive evidence on this subject. Certainly, it is guaranteed to provoke many interesting discussions among Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.

Everyone should follow their own aspirations and natural attractions towards a particular relationship with Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, based on whichever Vraja associate represents the best model or example of their aspirations. And that brings us to our next subject: **Following a Vraja associate.**

### **Following a Vraja associate – your first primary Vraja relationship**

Taking shelter of a specific Vraja associate and following his or her example is the only method recommended by the *ācāryas* for entering Kṛṣṇa's eternal *līlā* in Goloka Vṛndāvana. This principle of following a Vraja associate only applies to the four primary *rasas*: *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya*. There are no group leaders associated with *śānta-rasa*.

It is through this direct personal connection that we can gain access to that innermost sacred realm. At every step along the way, the path of *bhakti* involves establishing personal relationships to achieve success. In this section I'll be referring more specifically to *mādhurya-rasa*, but the principles apply equally to the other three *rasas*.

It should be obvious by now that we cannot enter Goloka Vṛndāvana just by remembering Kṛṣṇa at the time of death, in spite of being in a material state of consciousness or level of advancement less than *bhāva*. It simply does not work that way. For *mādhurya-rasa* we must take shelter of one of the eight principal *sakhīs* of Rādhā, whose *bhāva* and relationship we are attracted to, and under her personal guidance we will attain a similar *bhāva* and thus become qualified to enter Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's *nitya-līlā* as a member of her group.

This is not a conceptual mode of following. That *sakhī* must first accept us into her group and take us under her tutelage. She then becomes our primary guide, *śikṣā-guru* and gives us direct access into the eight daily pastime periods – *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*. This connection is facilitated by the mercy of our *dīkṣā* and *śikṣā gurus*. There are no exceptions to this procedure mentioned by any *ācāryas*, especially as it pertains to *mādhurya-rasa*, the highest and most confidential *rasa*.

Regularly hearing Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* is the first obvious step to take, because that is the primary source for our knowledge of Kṛṣṇa's associates. Unless we read the *līlā* books we won't become familiar with these unique associates, which means there will be no basis for developing an attraction for a particular *vraja-vāsī's* loving moods and relationship with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The more we immerse ourselves in the pastimes we are most attracted to, the more we are likely to find our desired Vraja associate to follow. Common sense is applicable at all levels of consciousness.

In addition to the *līlā* books, there are other books that describe the Vraja associates. For example, Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Rādhā-kṛṣṇa-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* and Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī's *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati* both contain detailed descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's main *gopas* and *gopīs*, including the *aṣṭa-sakhīs*, *aṣṭa-mañjarīs* and so on. They are invaluable resources to enrich and expand our familiarity and understanding. It should be more and more evident how this is a very personal process.

In the first part of *Rādhā-kṛṣṇa-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* and chapter two of *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, Rūpa Gosvāmī briefly describes the various different classifications and hierarchies in each of the first three primary *rasas* with Kṛṣṇa. Thus, there are different types of servants, cowherd boys and elders. Those desiring to have a relationship with Kṛṣṇa in one of these three *rasas* should study those books for details about the various groups and their leaders. *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* is the definitive book on *mādhurya-rasa*, and it is overflowing with the incredible details associated with that *rasa*. I'll explore *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* in more detail later in this chapter.

The only access to *mādhurya-rasa* with Kṛṣṇa is by being part of Rādhā's group (*yūtha*), through one of Her eight principal *sakhīs*. In fact, we can't enter *mādhurya-rasa* directly through Kṛṣṇa, we have to go exclusively through Rādhā and Her group. As was established in the previous section, we can enter *mādhurya-rasa* either as a *priya-sakhī* or as a *nitya-sakhī*.

The following verses about Rādhā's unique position in this regard are from various Vaiṣṇava *śāstras*, compiled in Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī's *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*:

Without pleasing Śrī Rādhā, it is impossible to obtain Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, we should always remember Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa together.

In the *Bhaviṣyottara-purāna*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, “O Nārada, if you have strong faith in *prema-bhakti* and you truly want to satisfy Me and obtain My mercy, then please become a loving devotee of Śrī Rādhā.”

Similarly, in the *Naradiya-purāna*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, “O Nārada, I solemnly declare to you again and again and again that without the mercy of Śrī Rādhā, My mercy does not arise.”

By the mercy of Śrī Rādhikā, the *sādhaka* gets the association of Rādhikā’s *sakhī-gana*. By the mercy of that *sakhī-gana*, one obtains birth as a young girl in Vraja. GGSP, 188-191

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Rāmānanda Rāya (Viśākhā) explained to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu the position of the *gopīs* regarding entrance into Kṛṣṇa’s Vraja pastimes:

The pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are very confidential. They cannot be understood through the [*rasas*] of servitude, fraternity or paternal affection. Actually, only the *gopīs* have the right to appreciate these transcendental pastimes, and only from them can these pastimes be expanded. Without the *gopīs*, these pastimes between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa cannot be nourished. Only by their cooperation are such pastimes broadcast. It is their business to taste the [*rasas*]. CC, 2.8.201-203

Without the help of the *gopīs*, one cannot enter into these pastimes. Only he who worships the Lord in the ecstasy of the *gopīs*, following in their footsteps, can engage in the service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the bushes of Vṛndāvana. Only then can one understand the conjugal love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. **There is no other procedure for understanding.** CC, 2.8.204-205

Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s *bhāvas* are self-manifest, unlimited, and composed of complete ecstasy. Even so, not even one iota of *rasa* can be experienced without the *sakhīs*, just as Iśvara, the Supreme Controller, is never manifested without His spiritual potencies or opulences. Therefore, what knower of *rasa* will try to enter these pastimes without taking the shelter and guidance of the lotus feet of the *sakhīs*? (GL, 10.17) CC, 2.8.206

Rādhā’s eight principal girlfriends (*aṣṭa-sakhīs*) are direct expansions of Her (*kāya-vyūha*). Each of these *sakhīs* embodies an aggregate of specific aspects of Rādhā’s personality and moods. Lalitā manifests a contrary mood and Viśākhā is softer. While all of these *sakhīs* are experts in the arts, Tuṅgavidyā is the *ācārya* who teaches all of the other *gopīs* the musical and dramatic arts, playing the four kinds of musical instruments, dancing, singing, acting, writing, composing, and so on. These are all aspects of Rādhā’s supreme personality.

Devotees who want to be part of Rādhā’s group will choose one of these eight *sakhīs* based on their attraction to the moods that *sakhī* exhibits, the kinds of relationships she has with both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and how she interacts in the pastimes. Each one is a unique aspect of Rādhā, through which, we establish a relationship with Her as a *priya-sakhī* or *nitya-sakhī*. This is a very



personal choice and it will unfold naturally the more we are immersed in hearing and remembering Their *līlās*.

Once again, Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains this in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*:

Having loyalty to the group leaders and their *sakhīs*, according to their own desires, the three types who follow the *parama-preṣṭha-sakhīs* with equal affection for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa become *priya-sakhīs* with a similar type of affection. The three types who follow *prāṇa-sakhīs* (principal *mañjarīs*) with more affection for Rādhā become situated eternally as *nitya-sakhīs* (*mañjarīs*) with more affection for Rādhā. UN, 8.137, Commentary

Sanātana Gosvāmī discusses connecting with Rādhā's group in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

They chant His names and are full of unique love for Him. Indifferent to everything else, they want only to become servants of Śrī Rādhā. BB, 2.1.21

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

The devotees of Śrī Rādhā, who is the dearmost beloved of Lord Madana-gopāla, are not impersonalists void of desires. They are fully confident that if Śrī Rādhikā accepts them as Her servants, everything they desire will be achieved, and more. The privilege of serving Śrī Rādhā is the rarest goal of life, and it is fitting that this privilege be attainable only by executing the most excellent of *sādhanas*.

That is to say, one can please Her Divine Grace only by the sacrifice of purely chanting the names of Śrī Rāsa-rasika, the hero of the *rāsa* dance. In sweet voices the servants of Śrī Rādhā always melodiously and loudly chant Kṛṣṇa's names. Such devotees are worthy to engage in such elevated service because their hearts are filled with the supreme variety of spontaneous ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa.

In his commentary in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains more about the nature of the primary relationship with one's chosen *sakhī* leader:

It has previously been explained in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* that attaining the position of a *gopī* cannot take place without *rāgānugā-bhakti*. And without following after the *nitya-siddha-gopīs*, *rāgānugā* cannot be perfected. *Rāgānugā* means to follow after those *gopīs* who have *rāga*. Those three types who follow the *nitya-siddhas* attain perfection like the *nitya-siddha gopīs* but they exist eternally in a slightly lesser position than the *nitya-siddha gopīs* that they follow.

...According to the principles of *rāgānugā-bhakti* a person should follow a desired *gopī* while having affection for her not less than one's affection for Kṛṣṇa. If one follows a *gopī* while having less affection for her than for Kṛṣṇa, it would not be much different from *vaidhī-bhakti*. Even *vaidhī-bhakti* cannot be perfected without following devotees. Therefore, in *rāgānugā-bhakti*, persons who desire to follow a *sakhī* with more affection for Kṛṣṇa must not have less affection for that *sakhī* than for Kṛṣṇa. UN, 8.137 Commentary

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura summarizes the process in both *Caitanya-siksamṛta* and *Jaiva-dharma*:

It was observed in the discussion about *rāgānugā-bhakti* that the person who is greedy for the mood of the inhabitants of Vraja performs his *sādhana* following after them with devotion. Thus, the aspirant for *prema* must learn the process for gaining entrance to the eternal pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa by the mercy of his *guru*. The devotee aspiring for *madhura-rasa*, by meditating on his identity as a *gopī*, attains entrance into the entourage of Rādhā. CS, Chapter 6, Part 5

From *Jaiva-dharma*:

Vrajanātha: What is the process of *rāgānugā-bhakti*?

Bābājī: The *sādhaka* who has developed greed towards the beautiful service mood (*sevā*) of a particular *vraja-vāsī* always remembers and meditates on his *sevā* to that personality. He is absorbed in the mutual pastimes of his beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa with that *vraja-vāsī*, and he constantly resides in Vraja, either physically or within the mind, having greed to obtain his or her *bhāva*. He follows that *vraja-vāsī's* example, and always renders *sevā* in two ways: Externally, he serves as a practicing *sādhaka*, and internally he renders *sevā* with the *bhāvas* of his *siddha-deha*. This is the process of *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

These statements indirectly expose an interesting and important point for consideration. Many devotees are under the impression that their *dikṣā-guru* personally takes them directly to Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes. But as we have just read, that is not explicitly stated by any of the *ācāryas*. Rather, the unanimous consensus is that by the *guru's* mercy, one learns and makes advancement on the path of *sādhana-bhakti*, but at the final stage, one must take direct shelter of a *nitya-siddha* Vraja associate, who then becomes the constant operative *śikṣā-guru*, guiding one to enter the eternal *līlā*.

There is a very important extension to this point. There are those who claim that a *guru* can't give a *bhāva* he doesn't have, so a *guru* in *sakhya-rasa* cannot give the disciple *mādhurya-rasa*. We can now understand that this is a completely fallacious concept and is not supported by any *ācāryas*. The *guru* does not "give" the disciple a *rasa* or its *bhāvas*. That is not the *guru's* function. The *guru* facilitates the disciple's connection to an appropriate *nitya-siddha* Vraja associate.

By the grace of our *dikṣā* and *śikṣā gurus*, who are all external manifestations of Kṛṣṇa's mercy, we attain the shelter of a Vraja associate, who is then personally responsible for bringing us into the *līlā* and giving us guidance, shelter, training and service, because it is the *nitya-siddha vraja-vāsī's bhāva* that we aspire for, not our *guru's bhāva*. This is the process described by all of the *ācāryas*. In fact, we will be eternally connected to that *vraja-vāsī* in a primary relationship, as described earlier by Viśvanātha Cakravartī.

The *ācāryas* never say to follow your *guru's bhāva* to enter Vraja. That is not the recommended process. And in many cases, disciples don't even know the eternal *rasa* and *bhāvas* of their *dikṣā-guru*, unless of course they have received those personal details directly from their *guru*, as many Vaiṣṇavas have, such as Viśvanātha Cakravartī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

On the other hand, there are also many Vaiṣṇavas who have followed the same *bhāva* and *rasa* as their *guru* and who desire to be part of the same group as their *guru*, so they can serve with them as eternal associates in Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. Nevertheless, those disciples are still mandated by the *ācāryas* to take shelter of, and follow the example of a *nitya-siddha* Vraja associate to enter *vraja-līlā*, and not their *guru*. While following their *guru* may be the ideal of many disciples, it is not always possible. Especially if one's *guru* is in *sakhya-rasa* and the disciple is in *mādhurya-rasa*, or vice versa. Eternal connections may still exist if the *guru* is a *priya-narma-sakhā*, i.e., the intimate cowherd boys who assist Kṛṣṇa in his pastimes with the *gopīs*.

Devotees practicing *rāgānugā-bhakti* who desire entry into *mādhurya-rasa*, will therefore focus their internal *bhajana* on Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and their chosen *aṣṭa-sakhī*, such as Lalitā, Viśākhā, Tuṅgavidyā, Citrā and so on. Meditations in one's *siddha-deha* will consequently always center around three primary relationships, and evolve from there. A whole new world of personal relationships begins to unfold within one's heart during *bhajana*, expanding eternally.

In his *Prīti-sandarbhā*, Jīva Gosvāmī talks about different types of devotees who can taste *rasa*. He mentions several divisions, one of which is, "the devotees who aspire to participate in the Lord's pastimes," and among those devotees there are, "the devotees who hear descriptions of the Lord's pastimes with His personal associates." He then reveals the serious implications of different modes of following a Vraja associate:

If [one who aspires to participate in the pastimes] desires in the same way as the personal associates of the Lord desire, then that devotee eventually becomes the Lord's personal associate. That devotee then attains the *vibhāvas* and other elements of *rasa* manifest in a personal associate of the Lord.

...If a devotee desires in a way that is different from the way the Lord's associates desire, then that devotee attains *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, and *sañcārī-bhāvas* that are generally ordinary in nature. Even when the *uddīpanas* (the stimulants of love) are present, that devotee does not perceive the sweetness of *rasa*.

If a devotee desires in a way that opposes the way the Lord's personal associates desire, then, even if the *uddīpanas* of *vātsalya-rasa* and other *rasas* are present, that devotee will not perceive the different *bhāvas*, nor will he perceive the sweetness of *rasa*. PS, *Anuccheda* 111

To end this section, here is an inspiring and instructional statement from *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

That world Goloka, shining even above Vaikuṅṭha, can be achieved only by firm, boundless love for the blessed feet of the lover of the *gopīs*. In that land one reaps the most valuable rewards, far beyond one's desires. When one meditates on the residents of that world, they grant the highest fortune of firm standing in *prema*. BB, 2.7.78

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

The only effective *sādhana* for reaching the highest world Goloka is the special kind of love that holds fast to the lotus feet of Śrī Gopinātha. And because that love reposes in the residents of Goloka, remembering the exalted Vaiṣṇavas of Goloka is the key to all success.

## The three *siddha* bodies – one identity, three transformations

Before I venture into a comprehensive examination of *siddha-praṇālī* and the origins and validity of the *siddha-deha* and *ekadāśa-bhāva*, I want to establish the terminology that I will be using throughout this chapter. There is widespread misapplication of the terms used in conjunction with this subject matter and it contributes greatly to the confusion that exists among devotees.

According to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, there are actually three successive spiritual bodies, of which the *siddha-deha* is the first. After the *siddha-deha*, there is the body or stage referred to as *svarūpa-siddhi*, and finally, *vastu-siddhi*. They correspond to three distinct phases of progress towards the ultimate goal of entering the unmanifested eternal *līlā* (*aprakāṣa-nitya-līlā*).

Here is a breakdown of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's use of these three spiritual forms corresponding to a devotee's stage of progress, with an explanation of the function of that particular spiritual body. These are the terms I have been and will continue to use throughout the book for consistency. I will discuss the later stages in more detail in the following sections.

**Spiritual Body:** *siddha-deha* (aka: *siddha-rūpa*)

**Function:** The desired mentally conceived, spiritually perfect form for identity development in *rāgānugā-bhajana* meditation. This body and identity is established using the template of *ekadāśa-bhāva*, as will be described in full detail later.

**Stages:** *niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, *āsakti*

**Spiritual Body:** *svarūpa-siddhi* (aka: *siddha-svarūpa*)

**Function:** This is the fully realized spiritual form and identity for direct participation in *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* via meditation in *samādhi*, while one is still within the physical and subtle bodies. When one attains *bhāva*, this spiritual form is bestowed directly by Kṛṣṇa exactly according to one's desires and preferences, previously cultivated while meditating on one's *siddha-deha* during *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*.

**Stages:** *Bhāva*, *prema* (beginning stages only)

**Spiritual Body:** *vastu-siddhi*

**Function:** When we are completely freed from the physical and subtle material bodies, we will take birth from a *nitya-siddha* Vraja *gopī*, and in that transcendental body and identity, we will engage directly in Kṛṣṇa's manifest eternal pastimes (*prakāṣa-nitya-līlā*) on an earthly planet. After our *prema* is fully perfected there, we are seamlessly transferred to the unmanifest eternal pastimes (*aprakāṣa-nitya-līlā*) in that final eternal body.

**Stages:** *Prema* in *bhauma-līlā* and *prakāṣa-līlā*

Here are a few references for *svarūpa-siddhi* and *vastu-siddhi*. More will be given later. Haridāsa Ṭhākura speaks to Lord Caitanya in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*:

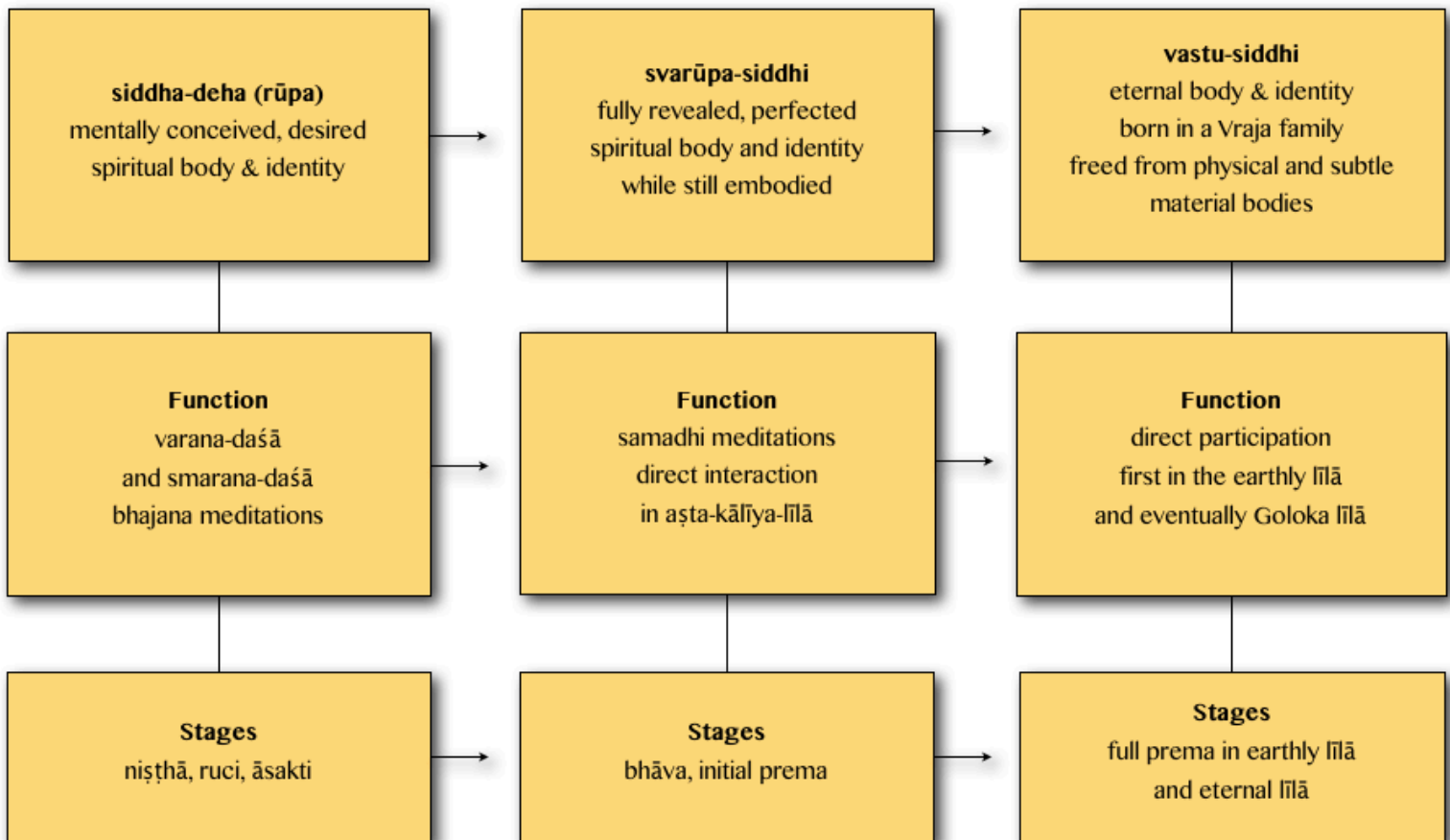
With the destruction of the subtle body, one attains concrete perfection (*vastu-siddhi*). At this stage, one's practice of *bhajana* borders on success. By Your mercy, when all subtle identifications fall away, he attains concrete perfection.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Notes:

As the devotee follows this method of cultivating *rasa*, the gap between his practice and perfection in *bhajana* narrows. Within a very short time, he realizes his spiritual identity, an attainment that is known as *svarūpa-siddhi*.

By the mercy of the *yutheshwari* (Rādhā), Kṛṣṇa's desire to give His blessings follows naturally. As soon as that happens, the illusory subtle body that was the result of turning away from Kṛṣṇa is easily destroyed and the *jīva* gains entrance into Vraja in his pure factual identity. This is called *vastu-siddhi*. HNC, 15.55

## The progressively manifested siddha bodies



## ***Siddha-praṇālī* – clearing up the misconceptions**

*Siddha-praṇālī* is yet another widely misunderstood and very controversial subject. There are many misconceptions associated with it so it's not surprising that so much confusion exists. There have been, and still are, unscrupulous people who have tainted the integrity of *siddha-praṇālī* by their improper implementation of this well established tradition.

Such people and their activities are the primary reason Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Śrīla Prabhupāda criticized those involved in these questionable dealings. That does not, however, infer that *siddha-praṇālī* itself is not legitimate, nor did either of them denounce it directly as we will discover in this section.

Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions *siddha-praṇālī* briefly in Nectar of Devotion:

In this connection, we should be careful about the so-called *siddha-praṇālī*. The *siddha-praṇālī* process is followed by a class of men who are not very authorized and who have manufactured their own way of devotional service. They imagine that they have become associates of the Lord simply by thinking of themselves like that. This external behavior is not at all according to the regulative principles.

The so-called *siddha-praṇālī* process is followed by the *prākṛta-sahajiyā*, a pseudo sect of so-called Vaiṣṇavas. In the opinion of Rūpa Gosvāmī, such activities are simply disturbances to the standard way of devotional service. NOD, Chapter 15, Page 108

Examining these statements carefully reveals that Śrīla Prabhupāda's harsh attack primarily has to do with these people (specifically males) dressing up as *gopīs* (external behavior), which we know is not a valid part of *rāgānuṅgā-bhakti*, and is therefore outside of that which is taught and approved by the *ācāryas*. Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda justly criticized them.

However, Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement above does not describe what *siddha-praṇālī* is factually, nor does it provide a complete picture or full understanding of *siddha-praṇālī* as it has been properly implemented in genuine Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava lineages for centuries. After objectively examining the facts, it will be clear that Śrīla Prabhupāda was trying to protect his disciples from exposure to the many deviant sects claiming to be followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

The truth of the matter is that *siddha-praṇālī* is most certainly *not* a bogus practice followed only by *prākṛta-sahajiyās* – far from it. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, received the full *siddha-praṇālī* details of his disciplic succession when he was initiated (*dīkṣā*) by Vipina Vihari (Bipin Bihari) Gosvāmī, and Bhaktivinoda also gave *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā* to his youngest son, Lalitā-prasāda Ṭhākura, as well as many of his other disciples.

I have included Śrīla Bhaktivinoda's *siddha-praṇālī* chart (*dīkṣā-patra*) on the following pages, both hand-written in Bengali by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda himself, and in English for reference. These documents were obtained by a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Sukavak Dāsa, a Ph.D. linguistics scholar, as he describes in his well researched book about Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, *Hindu Encounter With Modernity*:

Interestingly, Bhaktivinoda provides a letter of initiation (*dikṣā-patra*) that outlines the details of his *siddha-deha*. I include a reproduction of a handwritten copy of the *dikṣā-patra* in Bengali (p. 202) along with its transcription and translation (p. 232-233) that I originally obtained from Bhaktivinoda's maternal family home. The *dikṣā-patra* gives both the *siddha-praṇālī* and the *ekadāśa-bhāva* for Bhaktivinoda's entire *dikṣā* line running back to Śrī Jāhnava Mā, the wife of Nityānanda Prabhu. HEWM, Page 230

Sri Sri Godruma Candraya Namah.

## Srimati Jahnava Thakurani's Dhara (Parampara)

Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

Siddha Pranali is determined in accordance with Sri Gopal Guru Goswami, and Dhyan Candra Goswami's Archana Paddhati's.

Sri Guru Parampara	Sri Manjari Parampara	Age	Bodily Color	Color of Dress	Seva	Kunja of Residence	Group	Quality	Relationship	Order	Divine Cherished Ambition	Maintainer
1 Sri Nityananda Sakti Sri Jahnava Thakurani	Srimati Ananga Manjari	13	Basanta Ketaki	Blue Lotus	Dressing and Decorating	Anangambuda	Lalita's	Krsna Priti Kama	As far as who is to be served and what is the seva, that has been given by my Guru: The worshipable object is Sri Sri Radha Krishna within the forest kunjies of Vrindaban, and my eternal occupation is rendering seva to them. The siddha deha is always transcendental, unchangeable, and unaffected by time, and that is my real self. For I am an eternal maidservant of Sri Radha. My group leader is.....who is graceful and skilled in all the arts, she is a constant companion of Sri Radha. I always follow her order and consider myself her dast. Let me attain the seva, form, and qualities, like that of Sri Rupa Manjari. And by following in her footsteps along with the other sakhis and manjaris, let me begin Radha Krishna's nitya seva this very day. This mood is called 'parakastha', by the strength of this firm conviction one will come to know all of the moods and mellows of jugal seva, if one is submissive to following in the foot steps of the sakhis. I am looked after by.....for she knows the essence of everything. I reside in her Sri Kunja Mandira and follow her every order, for by doing so, instantly Radha Krishna's seva will be available to me.			
2 Sri Ramacandra Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Ratna Manjari	12/10	Milkish color	Star Cluster	Pan	Manohar	Lalita's	Krsna Priti Kama				
3 Sri Rajaballabha Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Rasa Manjari	13	Morning sun	Jaba Flower Red	Candan	Mohana	Campak-lata's	Krsna Priti Kama				
4 Sri Keshavacandra Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Kanaka Manjari	12/6	Molten Gold	Deep Blue	Camara	Ananda	Lalita's	Krsna Priti Kama				
5 Sri Rudresvara Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Rati Manjari	12/4	Molten Gold	Jaba Flower ( Red )	Camara	Rasa	Indulekha's	Rati Krsna Priti				
6 Sri Dayarama Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Dana Manjari	12/4	Kunda Flower ( white )	Golden Flower	Dress	Kanaka	Rangadevi's	Kama Krsna Priti				
7 Sri Mahesvari Goswami	Srimati Madhu Manjari	12/2	Golden color	Bumble Bee	Freshened Water	Nila	Tungavidya's	Madhure Krsna Priti				
8 Sri Guna Manjari Goswami	Srimati Guna Manjari	12/1	Milkish color	Blue Lotus	Fanning	Manas Harana	Vishaka's	Rasa Lila Krsna Priti				
9 Sri Ramamani Goswami	Srimati Rasa Manjari	13	Basanta Ketaki Flower	Blue Lotus	Dressing and Decorating	Ananga	Campak-lata's	Priti Krsna Priti				
10 Sri Jogesvara Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Juthi Manjari	12/10	Morning Sun	Star Cluster	Kunkuma Candan	Manohara	Citra's	Kama Krsna Priti				
11 Sri Vipina Bihari Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Vilasa Manjari	12/11	Tumeric	Star Cluster	Hari Candan	Ananda	Lalita's	Vilase Krsna Priti				
12 Sri Bhaktivinoda Thakura	Srimati Kamala Manjari	12/6/10	Lighting	Star Cluster	Camphor	Svananda Sukhada	Lalita's	Krsna Kama				

Bhaktivinoda's *siddha-praṇālī* chart in English.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura thus received the *ekadāśa-bhāvas* of his *siddha-deha*, which are listed in that document, including his *siddha* name – Kamalā-mañjarī. These same exact details are given in two of his most important books, namely, *Jaiva-dharma* and *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, thus confirming Śrīla Bhaktivinoda's acceptance of this system. *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* was written during Śrīla Bhaktivinoda's retirement in *rāgānugā-bhajana* in Jagannātha Purī, near the *samādhi* of Haridāsa Thakura, which is a further indication of the relevance of these matters.

More from Sukavak's book:

To substantiate the information found in the *dīkṣā-patra*, we find that in the *Siddhi-lālasā* section of *Gītā-mālā*, one of Bhaktivinoda's songbooks, he includes a selection of verses (only partially quoted by me) where he describes his *mañjarī-svarūpa* as follows:

My bodily complexion is like lightning and the color of my dress is like a cluster of stars. My name is Kamalā-mañjarī, I am eternally 12-1/2 years old, and my residence is called Svānanda Sukhada kuñja. My *sevā* is to bring camphor and I am in Lalitā's group. Our party leader is Śrī Rādhā, and the Lord of my Goddess is Śrī Nandānandana [Kṛṣṇa]. They are the treasure of my life. GM, SL, 1-2

If we compare this description with the information found in Bhaktivinoda's *dīkṣā-patra* we find that they match perfectly. All this evidence shows that Bhaktivinoda personally participated in and promoted the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti-sādhana* that included the process of *siddha-praṇālī* as defined by Gopāla Guru and Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī. HEWM, Pages 230-231

Some people claim that Śrīla Bhaktivinoda rejected his *guru*, Bipin Bihari Gosvāmī, along with his teachings, but those assertions are patently false hearsay and wholly unsubstantiated. Unconfirmed stories and gossip can never be accepted as valid proof of anything spiritually related. Such statements are misleading and highly offensive to both Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and his revered *guru*, whom he refers to in *Gītā-mālā* (1893) by his *siddha* name, Vilāsa-mañjarī, as seen in the chart above.

When will Vilāsa-mañjarī and Anangā-mañjarī [Jāhnavā Mā] see me and, being merciful, speak the follow essential words? GM, 3.1

O Vilāsa-mañjarī, Anangā-mañjarī and Rūpa-mañjarī, please notice me and accept me at your feet, bestowing on me the essence of all perfection? GM, 5.4

To provide more relevant context, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was initiated by Bipin Bihari Gosvāmī in 1880, so the *Gītā-mālā* quoted above was written 13 years after his initiation and before or during the time when he was writing *Jaiva-dharma*. Here are more details from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's hand written auto-biography, *Svalikhita-jīvanī*, as presented in Shukavak's book:

I had been searching for a suitable *guru* for a long time, but had not found one, so I was feeling disturbed. Whenever I met someone who inspired my devotion, when I studied his character, I became disappointed and lost faith. I was anxious to find a *guru* and so I prayed to God.

One night in a dream the Lord indicated that soon I would receive initiation. The next morning I felt relieved. In a few days Gurudeva finally wrote a letter saying, "I will come soon and give you initiation." When Gurudeva finally came both my wife and I received initiation and we were pleased. From that day on I felt compassion towards all beings and the sin of meat eating vanished from my heart and compassion arose towards living beings. SJ, 155-156.





Bhaktitirtha Thākura (1865–1922), Kedarnath Datta  
 Bhaktivinoda (1838–1914) and Bipin Bihari Goswami (1848–1919).

ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ ।

କ୍ର. ସଂଖ୍ୟା	କୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	ସଂଖ୍ୟା	ପ୍ର. ସଂ.	ଅନ.	ଅକ୍ଷ.	ସ୍ୱରୂପ.	ମାତ୍ର.	ପ୍ର.
୧	ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	୨୦୧୩	୧୯୩୦	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩
୨	ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	୨୧୧୦	୧୯୩୦	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩
୩	ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	୨୨	୧୯୩୦	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩
୪	ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	୨୨୦	୧୯୩୦	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩
୫	ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	୨୨୫	୧୯୩୦	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩
୬	ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	୨୨୫	୧୯୩୦	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩
୭	ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	୨୨୨	୧୯୩୦	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩
୮	ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	୨୨୨	୧୯୩୦	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩
୯	ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	୨୦	୧୯୩୦	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩
୧୦	ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	୨୨୨	୧୯୩୦	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩
୧୧	ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	୨୨୨	୧୯୩୦	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩
୧୨	ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନ	୨୨୨୦	୧୯୩୦	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩	୧୯୩୩

Kedarnath Datta Bhaktivinoda's handwritten *siddha-praṇālī* chart.

I have taken the time to include this information because some devotees try to minimize Śrīla Bhaktivinoda's connection with Bipin Bihari Gosvāmī and *siddha-praṇālī*. For further information, I have provided a separate pdf file <sup>2</sup> of an article titled, **Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's relationship with Bipin Bihari Gosvāmī**. This article provides well researched historical facts that will clear up the misconceptions and falsehoods, and supply valuable and factual insights into this area of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda's spiritual life. I also highly recommend reading Shukavak's book, *Hindu Encounter With Modernity*.

So what exactly is the correct understanding of *siddha-praṇālī* versus the versions that are so heavily criticized? Let's start by first defining what *siddha-praṇālī* means. *Siddha*, of course, means a perfected self-realized soul. *Praṇālī* means lineage or channel or succession. *Siddha-praṇālī* literally means the delineation of one's disciplic succession from the perspective of each *guru*'s eternal spiritual (*siddha*) identity, i.e., who they are in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*.

Lineage refers to one of the disciplic successions descending directly from the associates of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, such as Nityānanda, Advaita, Gadādhara, Lokanātha (Narottama), Syāmānanda and so on. Each of these lineages is also known as a "*guru-praṇālī*," a branch of the main *sampradāya* (Brahmā-Madhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya), and the same lineage using each *guru*'s *siddha* identity is known as the "*siddha-praṇālī*" of that *guru-praṇālī*.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *siddha-praṇālī* chart shows the unbroken disciplic succession he was connecting with, i.e., the actual sequential lineage of *gurus*, each one being the direct disciple of the previous *guru* in the list, all the way back to Lord Nityānanda's wife, Jāhnavā Ṭhākurānī, who is Ananga-mañjarī – Rādhā's younger sister in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was placed 12th on the list from her. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura reveals his desired relationship with Ananga mañjarī in a number of his prayers and songs, such as *Navadvipa-bhāva-taranga*, 132-165 (1899), and the *Gītā-mālā* mentioned earlier.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda's *siddha-praṇālī* chart lists the names of each *guru* as they were known in this world, i.e., their initiated *sādhaka* names. Then, next to each *guru*'s name is the name of their eternal *siddha-svarūpa* identity, thus revealing the *siddha-praṇālī* of his *guru-praṇālī*. Additionally, in the chart there are the other details of each *guru*'s *ekadāśa-bhāvas*, which reveal those additional aspects of their *siddha* identities.

*Siddha-praṇālī* in the simplest terms is a *guru* confidentially revealing to a qualified disciple, "This is my eternal identity in *vraja-līlā*. You will be associating with me in *vraja-līlā* in this identity. I'll teach you the method I was taught to attain my eternal identity, so you can attain your eternal identity too. And here are the *siddha* names of our disciplic succession." That's really the essence of it. There is nothing deviant about such confidential dealings between a *guru* and his disciple.

Thus, in part, receiving *siddha-praṇālī* means a disciple is given this detailed information about his or her particular disciplic succession. The other component of *siddha-praṇālī* is receiving or discussing the details of the disciple's own *siddha-deha* and its *ekadāśa-bhāvas*. Knowing the *siddha* identities of one's *guru* lineage means they can be included in meditations in one's *siddha-*

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<sup>2</sup> This pdf file was included with the distribution of this book.

*deha*, because there will be a connection with them in Kṛṣṇa's eternal *līlā*, similar to what Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura expressed in his songs quoted previously.

This is also described in Dhyānacandra's, *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*, and is perhaps the first written reference to *siddha-praṇālī*. The word *praṇālī* is found in the verse.

*tatradau mañjarī-rūpan gurvadin tu sviyan sviyan pranaly-anusarena samsmaret śrī-gurūparama-guru-krameneti tatah śrī-Rādhikām dhyayet, tatah śrī-nandanandanam*

Concerning that *dhyāna* (meditation), before anything else, the *sādhaka* should perform *smaraṇa* (remembrance) of the *mañjarī* forms of his *guru-praṇālī*, beginning with his *guru*, then *parama-guru*, and so on. Then he shall meditate on Śrī Rādhikā, and after that Śrī Nandānandana. GGSP, 344

Viśvanātha Cakravartī also follows this same etiquette when he refers to his *siddha-praṇālī* in *Sankalpa-kalpadrumah*, where he addresses his *guru*, Rādhāramana Cakravartī, who is Tūlasī-mañjarī, his grand-*guru*, Kṛṣṇa-carana Cakravartī, who is Raṅga-mañjarī, and his great-grand-*guru*, Ganga-Nārāyana Cakravartī, who is Prema-mañjarī:

Where am I, whose heart is filled with deceit and hundreds of other faults, and where is this sudden resolve concerning this rare subject matter? O Tūlasī, you are the personification of shelter for the helpless. You are my only refuge. Your unconditional mercy accepted me without counting my faults. SK, 90

O Raṅga-mañjarī, please bestow your mercy upon me. O Prema-mañjarī, please grace me with your compassionate glance. O Vilāsa-mañjarī, attracting me to your lotus feet and making me your servant, please accept me with the other *sakhīs*. SK, 91

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda initiated (*dīkṣā*) his son, Lalitā Prasada Ṭhākura, into his disciplic succession and gave him the same *siddha-praṇālī* chart, with a space at the bottom for his son to add his own information below his own details. Several of Śrīla Prabhupāda's early disciples also took initiation from Lalitā Prasāda and they too received the same chart and added their details. In addition, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda gave *dīkṣā* to some of his other disciples and provided them with the same *siddha-praṇālī* chart, as confirmed by Lalitā Prasāda to his American disciples.

Now let's isolate the primary issue of contention. As will be discussed in the following sections, learning or hearing about one's *siddha-deha* and its *ekadāśa-bhāvas* (i.e., the stage of *śravaṇa-daśā*), normally takes place when, due to the appearance of spiritual greed (*lobha*) for a desired *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa, one becomes qualified to engage in *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Until reaching that point, it is normally considered premature for a disciple to inquire about these matters.

Typically, but not always, the qualifications for this stage will appear only after a disciple has received *dīkṣā* and has subsequently been engaged in serious *sādhana-bhakti* for many years. Even then, as we learned in Chapter 3, the appearance of spiritual greed only manifests due to the mercy of Kṛṣṇa or a *rasika* devotee, who bestow this rare gift on worthy practitioners. So it may or may not take many years. There are no quantitative factors involved, only divine mercy.

Therefore, the proper bestowal of *siddha-praṇālī* in terms of initiation (*dīkṣā*) would not necessarily include giving neophyte disciples the details of their *siddha-deha* and *ekadāśa-bhāvas*, because they almost certainly would not be qualified for *rāgānugā-bhakti* at that time. However, it does appear that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura received these details at his initiation, implying that he was qualified at that time.

In fact, only when disciples are genuinely qualified and thus ready to engage in *rāgānugā-bhakti*, would they be deemed fit to learn about their *siddha-deha* and its *ekadāśa-bhāvas*. This is confirmed by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*:

When, on examining the disciple's natural tendencies, the spiritual master verifies that he truly has the qualifications for serving in *śṛṅgāra-rasa*, he informs him of the eternal form (*siddha-deha*) that he should cultivate as a *mañjarī* in Lalitā's subgroup of Śrīmatī Rādhārānī's group of *gopīs*.

Then the spiritual master explains the mutual relation between the eleven components (*ekadāśa-bhāvas*) of that spiritual identity (*siddha-deha*) necessary for the practice and the object of that practice – the pastimes the Lord enjoys throughout the eight periods of the day and night (*aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*). He especially shows the disciple his spiritual name, form, qualities, and principle service. HC, 15.64-68, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda's Notes to the verses.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda has thus summarized the proper implementation of this process according to his experience and realizations. Therefore, the improper implementation would be when a *guru* gives new disciples the details of their *siddha-deha* and *ekadāśa-bhāvas* even if they are not qualified. In some cases, the *guru* may also be unqualified to give this confidential knowledge and guidance.

This is specifically what is criticized and rightly so. This unauthorized type of *siddha-praṇālī* initiation still exists today, and it is not in line with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's instructions, nor the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*. Such confidential details and instructions must never be given to, or by, unqualified people.

In the next section, knowledge of the implementation of one's *siddha-deha* and *ekadāśa-bhāvas* will be proven beyond any doubts to be valid and essential components for progress in the final stages of *rāgānugā-bhajana*. But such knowledge should only be given to qualified disciples who are ready to implement these details in their personal *bhajana*. *Gurus* who indiscriminately provide these details to unqualified initiates, by whatever methods, are doing a disservice to those disciples in particular, and to Caitanya Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in general.

This is really the crux of the matter concerning the controversies about *siddha-praṇālī* – whether or not the *guru* and disciple are both qualified. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's acceptance, continuance and teachings about the most important aspects of *siddha-praṇālī*, namely the *siddha-deha* and its *ekadāśa-bhāvas* as core elements of *rāgānugā-bhajana*, are undeniable proof of the validity of those aspects for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. But there is still more to consider, so let's continue.

There are various methods employed by each *guru* regarding establishing the disciple's *siddha-deha* and *ekadāśa-bhāvas*. Some *gurus*, presumably being *bhāva-bhaktas* themselves, enter into a

meditative state, wherein they are said to receive these details from the *nitya-siddha gopīs*. They then reveal that information to their disciple after their meditation. Some *gurus* give or assign these details to the disciple based on their personal evaluation of the disciple's inclinations.

Other *gurus* work out these details collaboratively with the disciple based on the existing preferences that have already manifest within the disciple, which may be considered glimpses of their eternal nature (*svarūpa*). In this approach the disciple is essentially saying, "this is who I am," versus the *guru* saying, "this is who you are." Śrīla Bhaktivinoda recommended the collaborative method, and presumably this is how he developed his own personal *ekadāśa-bhāvas* with his *guru*, Bipin Bihari, when he received *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā*. He directly implies this in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* where he writes:

If one's preferences differ, the *guru* will make changes. If on the other hand the disciple does not like it, he should openly tell his spiritual master what he would prefer. The *guru* will consider the matter and give him another identity, and if the disciple likes it, also reveal his own. HC, 15.72-73

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda's Notes:

When the spiritual master is ascertaining the aspirant's pure personal inclinations, the aspirant should also help the spiritual master by speaking his mind about his own preferences. As long as he has not clearly established the disciple's inclinations, the *guru's* directions are not flawless.

The inclinations that have been shaped by one's meritorious deeds, through both this and previous lives, are called *ruci* or taste. This particular inclination, however, is integral to the soul (*svarūpa*). Should a person not have a natural inclination for *śṛṅgāra-rasa*, but for servitude or friendship, then he should be instructed accordingly; if not there will be undesirable consequences. HC, Notes to 15.72-73

Now, as far as the practice of providing a *siddha-praṇālī* chart (*dīkṣā-patra*) at the time of initiation, I have found no direct support for that practice in any of the books of the primary Gauḍīya *ācāryas*, nor have I found any direct supporting *śāstric* statements. Although Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura discussed *ekadāśa-bhāva* and the *siddha-deha* in great detail in his books, he did not specifically discuss the *siddha-praṇālī* chart as he had received it, other than mentioning above that the *guru* may reveal his *ekadāśa-bhāvas* to a disciple.

Thus, it can be concluded that receiving the details in the *siddha-praṇālī* chart is not an absolutely essential requirement for success in *rāgānugā-bhakti*. On the other hand, it is also not against any Vaiṣṇava principles, and based on Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's personal experience, I feel that if devotees are fortunate enough to receive those details it should serve to greatly enhance their *bhajana*. Therefore, although it is not essential, at the same time, there is no basis for it to be criticized or condemned.

As mentioned earlier, although Śrīla Bhaktivinoda gave *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā* to his son, Lalitā Prasāda, as well as to other disciples, for whatever reasons, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura did not give

the same *dīkṣā* and *siddha-praṇālī* information to his son, Bimala Prasāda – Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī – and this brings up the next important point in our discussion on this subject.

As far as I have read, there is also no written account of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī receiving *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā* from his *guru*, Gaura Kiśora dāsa Bābājī. Nevertheless, it is well known by many that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s *siddha-svarūpa* identity is Nayana Mani-mañjarī.

Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī was a disciple of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and thus Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Godbrother and friend. He also initiated Prabhupāda into the *sannyāsa āśrama*. In Śrīla B.V. Nārāyana Mahārāja’s biography of his *guru*, Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī, he recounts a discussion between his *guru* and another disciple regarding Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and *siddha-praṇālī*:

In those days Śrīla Gurudeva’s dear *sevaka*, Śrīpāda Nārāyana Dāsādhikārī inquired from him privately, “Did your *Gurudeva* reveal the identity of the *siddha-deha* of any of his own disciples or not?”

Solemnly, [Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī] replied, “He has certainly done so. Śrīla Prabhupāda (Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī) has given the identity of the *siddha-deha* and *śikṣā* in *bhajana-praṇālī* to some of his qualified disciples; otherwise the Śrī Rūpānugā line would come to an end. He also mercifully gave this *praṇālī* to me.”

Śrī Nārāyana Prabhu again asked, “Will you bestow your mercy and reveal the name of your *siddha-deha*?”

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, “Not just now; it will be disclosed at the appropriate time.”

Quite revealing indeed, and extremely important facts to integrate with our analysis and broader understanding. Notwithstanding these facts, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī did not present his *guru*’s disciplic succession as his own, along with the *siddha-praṇālī* details. Instead, he compiled a new disciplic succession of Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, which was not specifically a line of *gurus* and their direct disciples as shown in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *guru-praṇālī* chart, as well as in most other lineages at that time.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s disciplic succession was essentially a compilation of the most prominent Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* coming in succession from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In some cases there were large gaps of time between each member in his succession list. He of course included his father, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, whose *dīkṣā guru* was *not* Jaggannatha dāsa Bābājī, as we have learned.

Nor was Śrīla Bhaktivinoda the *dīkṣā guru* of Gaura Kiśora dāsa Bābājī, who was in the Advaita lineage from Śāntipura. None of the previous *ācāryas* in Śrīla Bhaktivinoda’s lineage were listed in Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s compiled lineage. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda passed away before Bhaktisiddhānta implemented this new disciplic succession, so we have no way of knowing how Śrīla Bhaktivinoda would have reacted and dealt with this situation.

This same disciplic succession presented by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was then passed on by Śrīla Prabhupāda to his disciples and the world as the reigning Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *paramparā* from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Under these circumstances, there was obviously no possibility of obtaining a *siddha-praṇālī* chart with the *ekadāśa-bhāva* details of each *guru* in that disciplic succession. That practice has not been continued since in their line.

Bhaktisiddhanta and Śrīla Prabhupāda have thus chosen to take the focus off of that particular aspect of the previously and currently prevalent system employed by the different Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *praṇālīs* descending directly from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

When Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī introduced this new disciplic succession, it was of course met with great criticism by many people in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava communities in India, both in Navadvīpa and Vṛndāvana. Some Vaiṣṇavas in India still question the validity of the lineage presented by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

Bhaktisiddhanta appears to have done this because he wanted to separate his mission from those who were improperly implementing the *siddha-praṇālī* system, as well as those caste gosvāmīs who were making a monopolistic business of giving *dīkṣā* into their family disciplic successions, without providing proper guidance and instruction as well.

Rather than represent Gaura Kīśora dāsa Bābājī's lineage, which was one of many valid *praṇālīs* at the time, and which was a time honored tradition, he chose to establish a disciplic succession that represented the descending transmission of essential knowledge passed down from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and which was not tied to a particular family, group or party. Thus, it could be said that it is a *śikṣā-guru* lineage. Some have called it a *Bhāgavata-paramparā*.

The net result is that he put forth the principle that it doesn't really matter which disciplic succession you belong to, as long as you are given *dīkṣā* and *śikṣā* by a realized Vaiṣṇava *guru*, and are properly following the teachings of the prominent Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* in line from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The spread of Vaiṣṇavism worldwide appears to validate his position.

Bhaktisiddhanta's innovations were also made in consideration of the unique circumstances wherein Vaiṣṇavism was beginning to spread all around the world to a whole new class of potential practitioners, none of whom would be qualified to hear about *siddha-praṇālī*, the *siddha-deha* or *ekadāśa-bhāva*. It would have been confusing and inappropriate. It was, rather, a time for laying the foundations of the science of *bhakti-yoga* worldwide, to be built upon and expanded throughout the future generations of Vaiṣṇavas.

And, as anyone who has studied their writings knows, neither Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī nor Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote about or discussed the *siddha-deha* and *ekadāśa-bhāva* to any great extent. They more or less avoided it and that is especially noteworthy because they were immediate direct representatives of Bhaktivinoda Thakura. However, we just heard that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī did in fact give these details and instructions to his qualified disciples, so it was most certainly not something he rejected entirely.

In spite of what Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote about *siddha-praṇālī* in his Nectar of Devotion, this excerpt from a private conversation with Hṛṣīkeśa dāsa, an early disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, in

Māyāpura India, (circa 1973), reveals very telling facts about Śrīla Prabhupāda’s actual position on this subject:

ACBSP: So what you have learned in Vṛndāvana?

HD: About *Nitya-līlā*, Gurudev.

ACBSP: And?

HD: *Siddha-praṇālī*, *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇam*. Right, Gurudev!?

ACBSP: YES, but who is *siddha*?

HD: One out of millions of seekers (quoted the verse Bhagavad Gītā, “*manusyānām sahasreṣu...*” But isn’t this (*nitya-līlā*) our goal, Gurudev?

ACBSP: Yes, we are the followers of Rūpa-Raghunath. This is the highest understanding, to be *dāsanudās* in Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā*.

HD: But what about *siddha-praṇālī*? How to qualify? Who will give?

ACBSP: **Guru will give.** You just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

HD: (I mentioned the story of Chota Krishnadās, who tried to quit his body by jumping into *Mānasa-gangā*, when he heard that only his *Guru*, who had already departed, could give him *siddha-praṇālī*) ...How to receive this eternal information, Gurudev?

ACBSP: **Guru will give. There is no material consideration about *Guru* is here or there. When you reach that level, *Guru* will give.**

HD: Gurudev, what about *mānasi-sevā*, like the Brāhmaṇa who burnt his finger in meditation? Isn’t that *bhajana*?

ACBSP: Kṛṣṇa makes no distinction. But if you serve Kṛṣṇa by mind He will accept. That is sure!

HD: Gurudev, whenever I mention anything about *Rūpānugā-bhakti* many of my Godbrothers get angry and say it is all a bunch of Gauḍīya Math nonsense, and you never taught that!

ACBSP: **Everything is coming, they will also know it.**

HD: Gurudev, is the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* by Kaviraj Gosvāmī the REAL *Nitya-līlā* detail?

ACBSP: Yes.

This conversation reveals a dramatically different attitude from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s initial statement about *siddha-praṇālī*. Here he says, “**Guru will give. There is no material consideration about *Guru* is here or there. When you reach that level, *Guru* will give.**” This appears to be a contradiction to his original statement, but it isn’t. It is perfectly congruent with my assertion that he wasn’t directly criticizing *siddha-praṇālī*, just the bogus implementation by unauthorized sects. In the above conversation he clearly indicates that it is a valid part of *bhakti* and that he



eventually planned to give all of this knowledge to his disciples, “Everything is coming, they will also know it.”

This is further proof of my original assertions that Śrīla Prabhupāda understood these details and planned to reveal everything in due course of time. It is clear from the above conversation that Śrīla Prabhupāda was acutely aware of his disciples’ neophyte status, and therefore made the necessary adjustments to his presentation of this confidential knowledge.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī also reveals more insights into his mindset, and provides additional proof that he understood and accepted this knowledge and these processes. In a letter to a disciple, he wrote:

I have noted your letter dated the 24th. The *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, about which you have heard from the Vaiṣṇavas in Vṛndāvana, should be highly regarded no doubt. But the way in which these pastimes are conceived of in the contaminated state is totally corrupt.

Some fortunate individuals are capable of knowing these things after chanting for a long time, for that is the identity of the true self. But it can only be known after one is freed of mental contaminations. With the awakening of this spiritual identity, one automatically has constant cognition of his spiritual form.

Those who say that they can teach or reveal this identity are practicing a kind of deception; it cannot be done. On the other hand, if a devotee receives some inspiration after sincerely chanting for a long time, he should go to the *sad-guru* or advanced devotees and ask for it to be confirmed and purified by them.

The spiritual identity has eleven aspects (*ekadāśa-bhāva*). There are many cases of unscrupulous *gurus* who artificially force-feed these designations on unqualified practitioners, but we cannot call this the mark of spiritual perfection.

Those who have achieved the perfection of being fixed in their spiritual identity (*svarūpa-siddhi*) have attained such a realization through internal revelation, and the spiritual master’s only involvement in these matters is to help the further advancement of a disciple. As a practitioner progresses toward spiritual perfection, all these things are revealed naturally within the heart that sincerely seeks service. *Prabhupāder Patrāvalī*

Within this letter Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī has given highlights of the process, perfectly in sync with the teachings of his father, as will be presented in detail as this chapter unfolds. He also confirms my explanation of the improper implementation of *siddha-praṇālī* as being the specific point of contention raised by him and our Śrīla Prabhupāda. This is additional irrefutable confirmation of the validity of *siddha-praṇālī*, *ekadāśa-bhāva* and the *siddha-deha*.

I have no argument nor disagreement with Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s approach to these matters. Nor do I find any fault with what he did regarding the disciplic succession he presented. He showed how *ācāryas* can be innovative in their missionary activities, shocking though it may be. That Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī continued the *siddha-praṇālī* principle with his few qualified disciples is also validation of my assertions. That Śrīla Prabhupāda did not give

these details to any of his disciples simply proves that none of them were qualified at that time, and those of us who were there during that period know this to be a blatantly obvious fact, which has been more than confirmed in hindsight.

Some Vaiṣṇavas argue that because the *paramparā* Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī promoted was not a bonafide unbroken lineage, his disciples are therefore not properly connected to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu or Kṛṣṇa via a bonafide disciplic succession. However, because Bhaktisiddhanta received *dīkṣā* from Gaura Kīśora dāsa Bābājī (at the recommendation of his father, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda) who was part of a bonafide lineage, he was in fact, properly connected, as therefore, was Śrīla Prabhupāda, his disciple. Thus, Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples are also properly connected to a bonafide *paramparā*, whichever way one chooses to look at it.

For those who doubt this, here is something to consider. Vaiṣṇavas know there are gaps in the disciplic succession from Brahmā to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, so how did those *ācāryas* appearing after a long gap reach perfection? Where did they find a bona fide *sampradāya* and its realized *gurus*? Food for thought.

Interestingly, none of the *ācāryas* emphasize that one must receive *dīkṣā* from a perfectly intact disciplic succession. Rather, they stress the qualifications of a *dīkṣā-guru*, who must be a genuinely realized Vaiṣṇava, ideally and preferably a *prema-bhakta*. Finding a *prema-bhakta guru* is definitely more critical to success than the lineage they belong to.

Furthermore, connection to a bonafide lineage does not always guarantee the spiritual credentials and qualifications of the *guru*. We have all witnessed far too many supposedly bona fide *gurus* from bona fide lineages falling by the wayside and sometimes even rejecting *bhakti* altogether. Once again, we must choose our *gurus* wisely and carefully.

There is also no mandate in the *ācāryas'* writings that disciples must receive these confidential details only from their *dīkṣā guru* and no one else. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī said that in the letter, “On the other hand, if a devotee receives some inspiration after sincerely chanting for a long time, he should go to the *sad-guru* or advanced devotees and ask for it to be confirmed and purified by them.”

In Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Jaiva-dharma*, the main character, Vijaya Kumara, did not receive this highest knowledge from his *dīkṣā-guru*. He received it from his *śikṣā-guru*, Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī, who was a qualified *rasika* Vaiṣṇava in another lineage. No conflicts of lineage were indicated in that context and no disloyalty to their *guru* either.

It is said that a current *mahā-bhāgavata ācārya* can change aspects of the process of *bhakti* to suit the prevailing circumstances, such as Śrīla Prabhupāda did when he allowed women to engage in Deity worship in ISKCON temples outside of India, or allowing men and women to live in the same *āśrama*, albeit separately. However, these adjustments were not fundamental changes to the essential processes of *sādhana* or *bhajana* as delineated by the *ācāryas*, they were simply external adjustments based on cultural considerations, made according to place, time and circumstances.

Neither Śrīla Prabhupāda nor Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, nor any other genuine *ācārya*, would ever arbitrarily change something as fundamental and absolutely essential as the internal processes of *rāgānugā-bhajana*, specifically having to do with the *siddha-deha*, *ekadāśa-bhāva*, *mānasi-sevā* and *līlā-smaraṇam*. Especially because their direct predecessor *ācārya*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, so elaborately described and recommended these processes as essential and critical steps to perfection.

All things being considered, it is indisputably clear from all of the *ācāryas'* writings, including Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in His discussions with Rāmānanda Rāya, (CC, ML, Chapter 8), that if one wishes to enter *vraja-līlā*, one absolutely must follow the example of, and be personally guided by, a Vraja associate of one's choice, who's nature and mood (*bhāva*) matches one's desired mood and relationship – especially for *mādhurya-rasa*. They are all unanimously clear that there is no other accepted method to enter *vraja-līlā*.

Part and parcel of the acceptance of a Vraja mentor, is that one must regularly and specifically meditate on one's desired participation (*mānasi-sevā*) in Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes throughout the eight periods of the day and night (*aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā*). This is done through the medium of one's *siddha-deha* in order to cultivate one's eternal identity along with the mood of love and service one aspires for. It absolutely and unequivocally cannot be done through the medium of, or in the context of, one's current temporary external material male or female identity.

This is confirmed by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's in his notes in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*:

One whose natural tendency is to cultivate the conjugal *rasa* should definitely adopt the female form and attitude of a *gopī* in Vṛndāvana. **No living entity can enter the conjugal mood of Vraja in a masculine mood or body. Only when one has adopted the identity as a *gopī* can he truly worship Kṛṣṇa.**

This identity is composed of eleven aspects (*ekadāśa-bhāvas*). **Thus, only one who has adopted these eleven attitudes can be said to have taken a *gopī* identity.** [He then lists the *ekadāśa-bhāvas*] **Whatever one's identity in this world, one should internally adopt a spiritual identity in these eleven aspects and worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa directly in that form.** HC, Notes to 15.58

There are no exceptions to these procedures found anywhere in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava texts, except in extremely rare and very special cases where Kṛṣṇa Himself bestows *prema* instantly as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu often did. Therefore, in order to contemplate and meditate properly as instructed by the *ācāryas*, one must first have a clear conception of one's desired eternal identity, relationship and service.

This most certainly cannot be accomplished by mere unguided mental speculation, which would be against all of the *ācāryas'* teachings and, thus, completely disastrous to one's progress in *bhakti*. Such speculative and uninformed meditation would be considered a disturbance to the accepted path. To ignore or minimize the value of the guidance provided by our *ācāryas* is offensive, very risky and not recommended.

Thus, there is the inescapable requirement to understand and implement one's *siddha-deha* and its *ekadāsa-bhāvas*, as described by Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī and Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī in their *smaraṇa-paddhatis*, by Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, and by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in *Jaiva-dharma* and *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*. I will thoroughly explore all of the *ācāryas'* teachings on these subjects in the following sections.

In spite of all these considerations, some devotees may still insist that Kṛṣṇa will simply reveal everything to a qualified devotee who is chanting sincerely, so there is no need to study this knowledge. That may be true to a certain extent. However, the truth is that Kṛṣṇa has already revealed every detail in the writings of the *ācāryas*, whose teachings are direct manifestations of His mercy. So there is no need to wait for revelation. It is immediately available to those who are ready, willing and able.

Thus, as the *guru* within the heart (*caita-guru*) Kṛṣṇa will direct all qualified devotees to study these teachings for their eternal benefit, and then He will reveal the proper understanding of this knowledge according to the qualifications of each devotee. That is primarily how Kṛṣṇa bestows His mercy upon us. These details and instructions were compiled for obvious reasons and should not be ignored or minimized, in favor of anticipated and very rare divine emancipation.

To illustrate these points, here are some highlights summarizing the opening conversation in *Jaiva-dharma*, Chapter 39 – Entering *līlā*:

...Vijaya: Prabhu, by your unlimited compassion, I have learnt everything, but I cannot control my real self, so I cannot firmly establish myself in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Kindly bestow upon me whatever instructions you may think suitable for me in my present condition.

...Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: In other words, you should completely abandon *sāstric* reasoning and logic, and engage in the *sādhana* of *rāgānugā-bhakti* according to the greed developed in your heart. Render profuse loving service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vraja. That is, engage in the *bhajana* of *vraja-rasa*.

...Vijaya: Prabhu, now I will put aside all the logical arguments of the *sāstras* and all the other paths, for I am becoming very eager to render appropriate services in *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, as taught and demonstrated by Śrī Gaurangadeva, under the guidance of my *guru-rūpa-sakhī*. Please instruct me how can I make my mind steadfast in this attitude, so that I can achieve my goal.

...Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: Before performing *rādhā-kṛṣṇa-smaraṇa*, always remember *gaura-līlā*, because it will stimulate and awaken your *bhāvas* of *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*. Always realize *bhajana-gurudeva* as none other than a Vraja *yuthesvari* or *sakhī*. Enter into *vraja-līlā* by performing *bhajana* in this way.

...Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: Two subjects are to be clearly understood in this connection: *upāsya-pariṣkṛti* and *upāsaka-pariṣkṛti*. *Upāsya-pariṣkṛti* means to refine the conception and realize the true nature of the *upāsya*, or the object of one's *sevā*. You have already accomplished *upāsya-pariṣkṛti*, for you have understood *rasa-tattva*.

There are eleven *bhāvas* with respect to *upāsaka-pariṣkṛti*; you have gained almost all of them, but you need to be somewhat more firmly established in them.

Vijaya: Kindly explain these *ekadāśa-bhāvas* to me thoroughly once again. JD, Chapter 39, Pages 837-839

This comprehensive and conclusive analysis of the origins and validity of *siddha-praṇālī*, according to the writings of the Gauḍīya *ācāryas*, is of vital importance for all serious Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, especially those who are desirous of engaging in *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*. Now let's examine and verify the origins and validity of the *siddha-deha* and its *ekadāśa-bhāvas*.

### **The *siddha-deha* and its *ekadāśa-bhāvas* – the origins and validity**

The notion of a “mentally conceived, perfect spiritual body” – the *siddha-deha* – defined by its eleven characteristics – *ekadāśa-bhāvas* – is either completely unknown or very misunderstood by a significant number of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, especially those of us who have learned about the path of *bhakti-yoga* in association with ISKCON. This is primarily because neither Śrīla Prabhupāda nor Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī discussed the *siddha-deha* in as much detail as the previous *ācāryas* did. Yet, it is a most essential component in the practice of *rāgānugā-bhajana*, as explicitly described by all of the *ācāryas* whose books we are examining.

Furthermore, the subject of one's *siddha-deha* and its *ekadāśa-bhāvas* is a primary point of contention for those who criticize Śrīla Prabhupāda's presentation of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Therefore, in this section I will also review specific aspects of this topic with the aim of resolving those disputes harmoniously. It will be abundantly clear that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not go into the same level of detail as the previous *ācāryas*, for all the reasons presented in the **Introduction**.

Different theories abound regarding the origins and application of one's *siddha-deha* and its *ekadāśa-bhāvas*. Many devotees question whether such knowledge is even bona-fide or relevant. Some Vaiṣṇavas think that these details are among the many bogus ideas coming from unqualified Rādhā-kuṇḍa Bābājīs, and thus they condemn these concepts as deviant *sahajiyā* nonsense to be avoided like the plague.

I will present the collective evidence from our *ācāryas* systematically, step by step, to show that such misconceptions are completely unfounded and sorely mistaken, because in actual fact, this knowledge comes directly from the highest source, namely, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. There are many pieces to this seeming puzzle, but once they are assembled logically and coherently, there will be clarity, and the conclusions will be self-evident.

Due to its very confidential nature, and because those who are genuinely qualified to implement this knowledge are extremely rare, even among Vaiṣṇavas, this knowledge has not been broadcast widely or openly to the same extent as *vaidhī-bhakti*. This is as it should be. Confidential subjects are not meant for broad public dissemination, even within the Vaiṣṇava community.

Rūpa Gosvāmī first introduced the *siddha-deha* (*rūpa*) in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, in the chapter on *sādhana-bhakti* – devotional service in practice – and it was further explained and clarified in the commentaries of Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī.

*sevā sādḥaka-rūpeṇa siddha-rūpeṇa cātra hi  
tad-bhāva-lipsunā kāryā vraja-lokānusārataḥ*

Following after the inhabitants of Vraja, one should perform service in one's physical body (*sādhaka-rūpa*) and in one's *siddha* body (*siddha-rūpa*), with a desire for a particular *bhāva* [of a Vraja associate - *vraja-lokānusārataḥ*]. BRS, 1.2.295

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

*Sādhaka-rūpa* refers to the physical body of the practitioner. *Siddha-rūpa* refers to the body which is suitable for one's desired service, and **which has been developed by internal meditation**. (*siddha-rūpeṇa antas-cintitabhiṣṭa-tat-sevopayogi-dehena*) One serves with a desire for the particular *bhāva* or *rati* of an associate of Kṛṣṇa situated in Vraja.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

One performs service with the *sādhaka-rūpa* – the present body – and with the *siddha-rūpa* – the body which is suitable for serving Vraja Kṛṣṇa in the particular type of *rati* or *bhāva* one desires, and **which appears through inner contemplation**, with a desire for a particular *rati* directed to one's beloved Kṛṣṇa situated in Vṛndāvana.

One should follow after the dear devotees of Kṛṣṇa such as Rādhā, Lalitā, Viśākhā, Śrī Rūpa-maṅjarī and those following after them – persons such as Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs. Accordingly, one should perform mental service (*mānasi-sevā*) in one's *siddha-rūpa*, following after the examples of Śrī Rādhā, Lalitā, Viśākhā, Śrī Rūpa-maṅjarī and others.

In one's physical body, one should perform services using one's body, following after persons such as Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs situated in Vraja.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī provides additional clarification of this verse in *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, and he repeats virtually the same explanation in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindhu*:

Living with the *sādhaka-rūpa* means in the physical body of the practicing devotee, **and the *siddha-rūpa* means one's own desired mentally conceived spiritual body, that is suitable for direct transcendental service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.**

*Tad-bhāva-lipsunā* means being eager to attain the glistening conjugal moods towards Kṛṣṇa, of one's favorite devotees in that mood, like Śrīmatī Rādhārānī and the *gopīs*. How to serve? With paraphernalia that are collected either mentally (in *siddha-rūpa*) or physically (in *sādhaka-rūpa*).

How to follow in the footsteps of the people of Vraja? In one's physical body one follows in the footsteps of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and other saints who lived in Vraja, and in the mentally

conceived spiritual body one follows in the footsteps of Śrīmatī Rūpa-mañjarī and the other eternal associates of Kṛṣṇa. RVC, 1.11

These concurring explanations of Śrī Jīva and Śrī Viśvanātha have made it explicitly clear what Rūpa Gosvāmī meant by this verse, leaving no room for misinterpretation. The *siddha-deha* is conceived within the mind for the purpose of service in meditation (*mānasi-sevā*), as part of the internal practice of *rāgānugā-bhajana*.

Some devotees contend that the *siddha-deha* cannot be “conceived in the mind” of a practitioner who is not freed from *anarthas*, because the mind is made of material energy and the *siddha-deha* is supposed to be spiritual and perfect (*siddha*). How can a conditioned and contaminated material mind conceive of a perfect spiritual body? This argument is easily dismissed by the following verses in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

At the time of initiation, when a devotee fully surrenders unto the service of the Lord, Kṛṣṇa accepts him to be as good as Himself. When the devotee’s body is thus transformed into spiritual existence, the devotee, in that transcendental body, renders service to the lotus feet of the Lord. CC, 3.4.192-193

Thus, for one who is truly qualified to engage in *rāgānugā-bhakti*, the *siddha-deha* is not a product of material imagination or mental speculation. Those who are not qualified and who prematurely try to contemplate their *siddha-deha*, will not achieve the desired results, and it could be detrimental to their *bhakti*. I will discuss those issues in more detail later in this chapter.

For a proper perspective and context, keep in mind that this verse from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* is in the chapter on *sādhana-bhakti* – devotional service in practice. It comes before the chapters on *bhāva* and *prema* – the stages of perfection of *sādhana-bhakti*. Therefore, this recommended meditation is unquestionably part of one’s practice – *sādhana* – and not perfection – *sādhyā*.

Now let’s compare Śrīla Prabhupāda’s translation of this same verse as it is quoted in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

The advanced devotee who is inclined to spontaneous loving service should follow the activities of a particular associate of Kṛṣṇa’s in Vṛndāvana. He should execute service externally as a regulative devotee, as well as internally from his self-realized position. Thus, he should perform devotional service both externally and internally. CC, 2.158

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave no purport to this verse, nor did he specifically write about this verse or the *siddha-deha* in the Nectar of Devotion. This was again consistent with his policy of avoiding the details of this subject, as stated previously. It is very revealing however, that Śrīla Prabhupāda translated *siddha-rūpeṇa* as one’s “self-realized position.” The *siddha-deha* is factually the first stage in the process of realizing one’s eternal identity. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s use of the term “self-realized” does not mean the platform of *bhāva*, because this verse refers to *sādhana* during the stage of practice.

In Sanātana Gosvāmī's *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, when Nārada Muni instructs Gopa-kumāra, we learn that meditating on one's *siddha-deha* during *sādhana* also applies to those *sādhakas* desiring to enter Vaikuṅṭha:

In his internal meditation, the *sādhaka* serves the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a particular *rasa*, with a form, dress, and so on that are suitable for his service. Achieving perfection at the end of his life, he enters Vaikuṅṭha. At that time, his heart is attracted to that previous *rasa* in which, while he was in the *sādhaka* stage, he worshiped the Lord, and he accepts an identical dress and form, knowing them to be dear to Śrī Bhagavān. BB, 2.4.145-146

From Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

Whoever comes to Vaikuṅṭha realizes the very same service to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa for which he had developed a taste by the end of his material life, and he realizes that service in full detail, with its dress, form, and so on, for each mood of devotion is dear to the Personality of Godhead and each gives pleasure to the devotee absorbed in it.

In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* there are a number of references to the *siddha-deha*, the first of which was when Rāmānanda Rāya explained to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu exactly how one attains the mood of the *gopīs* (*sakhī-bhāva*) by meditating on Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *līlā* in one's *siddha-deha*.

Therefore, one should accept the mood of the *gopīs* and meditate on the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa both night and day. CC, 2.8.228

*siddha-dehe cinti' kare tāhāññi sevana*  
*sakhī-bhāve pāya rādhā-kṛṣṇera caraṇa*

One should meditate on one's eternal spiritual body (*siddha-deha*) and use it to serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa; by doing so, one will attain the direct association of Their lotus feet in the mood of the *gopīs*. CC, 2.8.229

Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation of CC, 2.8.229:

After thinking of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Their pastimes for a long time and after getting completely free from material contamination, one is transferred to the spiritual world. There the devotee attains an opportunity to serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as one of the *gopīs*.

Even though Prabhupāda presented an extensive purport to this verse, he expanded the translation well beyond its direct meaning. He didn't translate the words about meditating on the *siddha-deha* (*siddha-dehe cinti' kare*) and he added the part about getting free from material contamination and meditating for a long time, neither of which are in the original Bengali. Interestingly, as far as I know, Śrīla Prabhupāda's Purport may be the only direct reference he made to the *siddha-deha* in all of his books:

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura comments that the word *siddha-deha*, "perfected spiritual body," refers to a body beyond the material gross body composed of five elements and the subtle astral body composed of mind, intelligence and false ego. In other words, one



attains a completely spiritual body fit to render service to the transcendental couple Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa: *sarvopādhi-vinirmuktaṁ tat-paratvena nirmalam*.

When one is situated in his spiritual body, which is beyond this gross and subtle material body, he is fit to serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. That body is called *siddha-deha*. The living entity attains a particular type of gross body in accordance with his past activities and mental condition. In this life the mental condition changes in different ways, and the same living entity gets another body in the next life according to his desires. The mind, intelligence and false ego are always engaged in an attempt to dominate material nature.

According to that subtle astral body, one attains a gross body to enjoy the objects of one's desires. According to the activities of the present body, one prepares another subtle body. And according to the subtle body, one attains another gross body. This is the process of material existence. However, when one is spiritually situated and does not desire a gross or subtle body, he attains his original spiritual body.

As confirmed by the Bhagavad-gītā (4.9): *tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti so 'rjuna*. One is elevated to the spiritual world by the spiritual body and is situated either in Goloka Vṛndāvana or in another Vaikuṅṭha planet. In the spiritual body there are no longer material desires, and one is fully satisfied by rendering service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

This is the platform of *bhakti* (*hr̥ṣīkena hr̥ṣīkeśa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate*). When the spiritual body, mind and senses are completely purified, one can render service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His consort. In Vaikuṅṭha the consort is Lakṣmī, and in Goloka Vṛndāvana the consort is Śrīmatī Rādhārānī. In the spiritual body, free from material contamination, one can serve Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. When one is thus spiritually situated, he no longer thinks of his own personal sense gratification.

This spiritual body is called *siddha-deha*, the body by which one can render transcendental service unto Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The process is that of engaging the transcendental senses in loving devotional service. This verse specifically mentions, *sakhī-bhāve pāya rādhā-kṛṣṇera caraṇa*: only transcendently elevated persons in the mood of the *gopīs* can engage in the service of the lotus feet of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

This explanation of the *siddha-deha* differs somewhat from the previous *ācāryas'* statements mentioned above, as well as others that will be examined further on. As we read previously, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explained that there are in fact, three phases of spiritual bodies – *siddha-deha*, *siddha-svarūpa* and *vastu-siddhi*.<sup>3</sup>

What Śrīla Prabhupāda is describing is actually a mixture of the *siddha-deha* and the *siddha-svarūpa* body which is attained by meditation on the *siddha-deha* in *rāgānugā-bhajana*. It is the second stage, where Kṛṣṇa bestows the desired spiritual body and identity when one attains *bhāva*, while one is still embodied. Meditation on the *siddha-deha* results in the attainment of the

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<sup>3</sup> Please refer to the section: The three *siddha* bodies and the accompanying diagram on pages 151-152

*siddha-svarūpa*. That is followed by *vastu-siddhi*, when one obtains the final spiritual body by taking birth from a *nitya-siddha gopī* in Kṛṣṇa's earthly pastimes (*bhauma-līlā*).

The *siddha-deha* is clearly explained by Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī, as a mentally conceived spiritually perfect body, while one is still engaged in *rāgānugā-sādhana*, and still undergoing *anartha-nivṛtti*. It is definitely a spiritual body and it is suitable to render service internally (*mānasi-sevā*) to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, but it is not “attained” it is conceived in meditation as explained by the *ācāryas*. The *siddha-svarūpa* is attained or rather “awarded” by Kṛṣṇa when the devotee reaches the stage of *bhāva*. I do not consider this to be a fault or mistake on Prabhupāda's part, rather, it's an issue of semantics. There are no flaws in the essence of what he wrote.

One does not have to be completely free from material contamination (i.e., *anarthas* and material desires) to meditate on one's *siddha-deha*, but one must be qualified by spiritual greed (*lobha*) and the steadiness of *niṣṭhā*, which implies an advanced level of *anartha-nivṛtti*, as we read in Chapter 4. Also, the *siddha-deha* is not the final eternal spiritual form and identity as we have learned from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, whose teachings on the *siddha-deha* are completely in sync with Rāmānanda Rāya, Sanātana Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and Viśvanātha Cakravartī.

Let's continue on with more from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, where Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja gives his own version of the *sevā sādḥaka-rūpeṇa siddha-rūpeṇa cātra hi* verse from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

*bāhya, antara, – ihāra dui ta' sādḥana*  
*'bāhye' sādḥaka-dehe kore śravaṇa-kīrtana*

*Sādḥana-bhakti* should be performed both externally and internally. First, one should engage the physical body (*sādḥaka-deha*) and external senses in the processes of devotional service beginning with hearing and chanting (*śravaṇa-kīrtana*). CC, 2.22.156

*'mane' nija-siddha-deha kariyā bhāvana*  
*rātri-dine kore vraje kṛṣṇera sevana*

Next, internally, one should engage the mind to think of one's own *siddha-deha*, and in that spiritual body conceived within the mind, one should day and night perform *sevā* to Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. CC, 2.22.157

I've also used different translations for these two verses that follow the exact Bengali, which is straight forward and not cryptic. This is again somewhat different from what is found in Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* translation, which reads as follows:

There are two processes by which one may execute this *rāgānugā-bhakti* – external and internal. When self-realized, the advanced devotee externally remains like a neophyte and executes all the śāstric injunctions, especially those concerning hearing and chanting. But within his mind, in his original, purified, self-realized position, he serves Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana in his particular way. He serves Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day, all day and night. CC, 2.22.156-157

Śrīla Prabhupāda did not write a purport to these verses either, instead, he has more or less embedded his purport within the translation, because his translation again goes beyond the words in the Bengali verse. As such, it alters part of the direct meaning which does match the previous *ācāryas'* statements on this matter as we can clearly see. And to reiterate, it is very telling that Prabhupāda again referred to the *siddha-deha* as one's "self-realized position", which confirms, albeit in an obtuse way, that contemplating the *siddha-deha* is a necessary component in the practice of *rāgānugā-sādhana*.

Therefore, it has to be concluded that Śrīla Prabhupāda presented this subject as such because he didn't want to delve into these esoteric details of *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana* at that time, nor did he want to open up the subject for more discussion and inquiry by his disciples or other followers. Thus, he chose to translate those verses accordingly.

This was his prerogative as an *ācārya* considering the unique time and circumstances he was dealing with in his mission. *Rāgānugā-bhakti* is a very confidential subject and because this was the first time it was being presented to the entire world of highly unqualified people, Prabhupāda followed Kṛṣṇa's directions to do it this way. No fault, no mistake, no criticism. Rather, this is an informed and considered understanding of how an *ācārya* deals with such unprecedented complexities in his service to Kṛṣṇa.

I have purposely made these comparisons because it is inevitable that disciples and followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda will compare his statements to what is being presented here from the previous *ācāryas*. The basis of my presentation are the books of these *ācāryas* and they are all completely in sync regarding their teachings about the *siddha-deha*. The proper and complete understanding of this subject can only be acquired and realized by studying their collective conclusions and not otherwise. That is why Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu instructed them to write these books.

Moving on, when Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura discussed the *siddha-deha* and *ekadāśa-bhāva* in *Jaiva-dharma*, he did so in the context of a conversation between Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī and his student Vijaya Kumāra. This was a very significant and deliberate choice on his part, as we will see.

Gopāla Guru's meditation manual, *Gaura-Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*, and his disciple Dhyānacandra's, *Gaura-Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*, are arguably the first known written accounts regarding the implementation of the *ekadāśa-bhāva* of the *siddha-deha*, along with the detailed meditation techniques of the *siddha-deha*. These *paddhatīs* are indicated in *Jaiva-dharma* as being the basis for those details which Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura delineated therein.

From Dhyānacandra's, *Gaura-Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*; note the first sentence:

*asyaiva siddha-dehasya, sādhanani yatta-kramam  
ekadāśa-prasiddhani, laksyante 'tīmanoharam  
nāma rūpam vayo vesah, sambandho yūtha eva ca  
ajna sevā parakastha, palya-dasi nivasakah*

The eleven aspects of this *siddha-deha* are well known. They are as follows:

- (1) name
- (2) complexion or form
- (3) age
- (4) dress
- (5) relationship
- (6) group
- (7) order
- (8) service
- (9) divine cherished ambition
- (10) maintainer
- (11) residence

GGSP, 92-93

Although Rūpa Gosvāmī did not specifically mention *ekadāśa-bhāva* in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* or *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, in *Rādhā-kṛṣṇa-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* he uses the template of *ekadāśa-bhāva* when describing the *aṣṭa-sakhī gopīs*. He describes their complexion, age, dress, relationship, group, service and so on. Here are some examples:

Śrī Lalitā is renowned by the name Anurādhā. She is decorated with the qualities of both a *vāma nāyikā* (heroine) and *prakharā nāyikā*. Śrī Lalitā's bodily complexion resembles bright yellow *gorocana* and her attire has the color of a peacock's tail. RKGD, 81

Viśākhā's attire resembles the sky embedded by stars – it is blue with white embroideries of flowers and leaves. Her complexion resembles lightning. RKGD, 84

Tuṅgavidyā is the fifth of the *variṣṭha sakhīs*. She is five days older than Śrī Rādhikā. Her body emanates a fragrance of sandalwood mixed with camphor, and her complexion resembles *kuṅkuma*. Tuṅgavidyā's clothes are light yellow. She is decorated by the qualities of *dakṣinā nāyikā* and *prakharā nāyikā*. RKGD, 90-91

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī grew up during Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's manifest *līlā* and was a favorite young devotee of Mahāprabhu, who gave him the name, Gopāla Guru, when he was only a young boy.<sup>4</sup> He was the main disciple of Vakreśvara Paṇḍita (Tuṅgavidyā *sakhī*, GGSP, 275) who received this knowledge directly from Svarūpa Dāmodara (Lalitā *sakhī*), Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's most confidential and intimate associate. Gopāla Guru was also the first curator of Lord Caitanya's *Gambhīrā (bhajana-kuṭīra)* in Jagannātha Purī after His manifest *līlā* ended, which is the time frame for the conversations in *Jaiva-dharma*.

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<sup>4</sup> Please refer to the Appendix for a short biography of Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī.

We can thus understand the importance Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gave to this subject, because he was establishing unequivocally that this knowledge comes directly from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the absolute highest authority, through Svarūpa Dāmodara, His most intimate associate, in both *Gaura līlā* and *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. There can be no other conclusion. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu also instructed Rūpa Gosvāmī so, again, He was the direct source of all Śrī Rūpa's knowledge regarding the processes of *bhakti*, including the *siddha-deha*. The same applies to Sanātana Gosvāmī. These facts are indisputable. They give us an important contextual understanding of the sources and chain of dissemination of this confidential knowledge.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura confirms this in several places in *Jaiva-dharma*:

“It is very good that you are going to Purī to take *darśana* of Śrī Jagannāthadeva. Śrīmān Mahāprabhu's sitting place is in Kāśī Mīśra's house in Purī, and Śrī Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī, the disciple of Śrī Vakreśvara Paṇḍita, is present there now in all his glory. Be sure to have his *darśana* and accept his instructions with devotion. **Nowadays, it is only in that mahātmā's throat that the splendor of Śrī Svarūpa Gosvāmī's teachings is fully manifest.**” JD, Chapter 26, Page 594

...You (Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī) are the pre-eminent holy master of the Nimānanda-sampradāya and you are reigning as *jagad-guru* on the seat of Śrīmān Mahāprabhu's successor, Śrī Svarūpa Gosvāmī. We desire to hear *rasa-tattva* from your divine lips, so that our scholarship may become fruitful.” JD, Chapter 26, 597

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: Śrīmān Mahāprabhu authorized and empowered His different associates respectively with different missionary responsibilities, and following His instructions, they discharged their services flawlessly.

Vijaya: Please tell me what those various responsibilities were, and to whom Śrīmān Mahāprabhu entrusted them.

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: Śrīmān Mahāprabhu entrusted Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara with the responsibility of teaching the process of *sevā* endowed with transcendental *rasa* (*rasamayī upāsanā*). To fulfill Śrīmān Mahāprabhu's order, Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara presented his treatise in two parts. One part is called the internal path (*antaḥ-panthā*) of *rasamayī upāsanā*, while the second part is called the external path (*bahih-panthā*) of *rasamayī upāsanā*.

Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara offered this *antaḥ-panthā* around the neck of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī (Rati-mañjarī), and it is illustrated and well-preserved in Dāsa Gosvāmī's writings. He taught the *bahih-panthā* to Śrī Vakreśvara Gosvāmī, and this is the distinguished treasure of our line right up to the present day. I gave this treasured process to Śrīmān Dhyānacandra, and he has written a *paddhati* (a systematic, step-by-step method of practice) based upon it, which you have already obtained.

...He ordered and empowered Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī to manifest *rasa-tattva*. ...Śrīmān Mahāprabhu entrusted Śrī Raya Ramananda with the responsibility of elaborately illustrating *rasa-tattva*, and through Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, he accomplished this to the fullest extent. JD, Chapter 39, Pages 847-848

The exalted origins of the knowledge regarding the *siddha-deha* and *ekadāśa-bhāva*, as well as its validity and relevance to all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas are thus established beyond any doubt or argument. All of the knowledge from the *ācāryas* presented in this Chapter is thus directly or indirectly from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the highest authority. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura further emphasized this by choosing to use Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī as one of the key characters in *Jaiva-dharma*, specifically to present these very esoteric subjects, which were first compiled in Gopāla Guru's *smaraṇa-paddhati*, as he learned it directly from Vakreśvara Pandit and Svarūpa Dāmodara.

In *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda presents the same details about the *ekadāśa-bhāvas* of the *siddha-deha*, along with the five stages of identity transformation, just as he did in *Jaiva-dharma*. *Jaiva-dharma* was published when Śrīla Bhaktivinoda was 58 years old (1896) and *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* was published four years later (1900).

Thus, this knowledge was presented in full detail at a time in Śrīla Bhaktivinoda's life when he was approaching retirement, during which time he became even more deeply immersed in *rāgānugā-bhajana*, exactly as he described in his books, especially, *Bhajana-rahasya* (1902). More relevant facts to add to the picture.

Even more compelling is that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura divulged his own personal *ekadāśa-bhāvas* in his delineation of these details. This is indeed incredibly revealing, and solely for our benefit. Normally, one should not reveal such confidential details publicly.

As if that wasn't enough, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura wrote *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* as a conversation between Lord Caitanya and Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Whether one believes that this was an actual conversation that Śrīla Bhaktivinoda "channeled" through meditation, or simply a literary device used to make his point, the implications are the same. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda was further emphasizing that this knowledge comes directly from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and is fully approved and recommended by Him.

There is absolutely no other interpretation to be considered, and these essential esoteric facts should never be disregarded nor diminished in significance. Thus, there is no possibility of denying the importance of the internally conceived *siddha-deha* processes, including *ekadāśa-bhāva* and the five stages of transformation and manifestation of one's eternal identity and form. They are absolutely integral to one's success in *rāgānugā-bhajana*, and should be understood and implemented by all serious and qualified practitioners.

Some devotees may still insist that there is no need to learn or study these details because everything will be revealed internally simply by chanting the Holy Names. That would be true only if the chanting was done without offenses. The results speak for themselves. And, as if to answer such questions preemptively, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda invoked the *nāmācārya*, Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, to be the one who presented this knowledge and instructions at the direct request of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Could it possibly be any more clear or authoritative?

If all that was required for realizing these details was simply chanting, then Haridāsa Ṭhākura would have been the quintessential example to confirm that. Instead, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura invoked Haridāsa to convey these esoteric details directly to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. And this

knowledge was presented after fourteen chapters discussing the glories of chanting the Holy Names.

These points are indeed very revealing and indicative of his intentions and the conclusions to be drawn from them. Interestingly, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda wrote *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* when he was retired in a *bhajana-kuṭīra* near Haridāsa Ṭhākura's *samādhi* in Jagannātha Purī.

Another important point may be considered. Some Vaiṣṇavas believe that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was a *sādhana-siddha* – a *nitya-baddha jīva* who achieved perfection through the process of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, exactly as he describes elaborately in his books. From that perspective, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda's books chronicle his spiritual journey to success as an unprecedented inspiration for all of us. Many other Vaiṣṇavas feel that Śrīla Bhaktivinoda was a *nitya-siddha mañjarī* who descended from *Goloka* to teach this process by direct personal example.

In either case, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's personal example of receiving the details of his *siddha-deha* and *ekadāśa-bhāva* from his *guru*, and his implementation of these principles as he described elaborately in his books, represents a very powerful precedent to be seriously considered by all sincere devotees who desire success on this path. If one accepts Śrīla Bhaktivinoda as a descended *nitya-siddha*, then the implications are even more compelling.

Thus far in this section, we have examined the statements of Sanātana Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, Rāmānanda Rāya, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī, Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. They are all in full agreement about the nature and function of the *siddha-deha*, as are Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī. We definitely have a preponderance of evidence from an impressive alliance of the topmost Vaiṣṇava teachers.

Rūpa Gosvāmī did not elaborate on the details of *ekadāśa-bhāva* in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, because of its confidential nature and its use primarily (but not exclusively) for those desiring to enter *mādhurya-rasa*. Details related to the implementation of one's *ekadāśa-bhāva* are beyond the scope and intended purpose of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. As Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura informed us, that was part of Svarūpa Dāmodara's assigned teaching task.

The same applies to *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, which is not a *paddhati* or manual of instructions, rather, it is an unprecedented look inside the esoteric layers of *mādhurya-rasa*. But, as we will see later in this chapter, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* provides the details necessary for the natural expansion and development of one's *ekadāśa-bhāvas*.

Of all the *ācāryas*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura presents the most comprehensive analysis and synthesis of these subjects in pursuance of Śrīla Gopāla Guru's presentation of the original teachings of Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī. That Śrīla Bhaktivinoda did this in the context of a more modernized society and world also adds to the value of his perspective and teachings, to our lasting benefit.

The fact that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't fully expand the details of this specific knowledge does not mean or imply that it is not bonafide or relevant or necessary. Nor does it mean that they arbitrarily changed or minimized or dismissed these most

confidential processes of *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana* for future generations of Vaiṣṇavas following in their line. That should be more than clear at this point.

We read earlier that Śrīla Prabhupāda intended to translate and distribute *Jaiva-dharma* and other books of the *ācāryas*, so we can understand that these subjects would most certainly have been broached at some point in the future, being that it is the core of the final chapters in *Jaiva-dharma*. However, it was not Kṛṣṇa's arrangement that it would transpire that way.

The *siddha-deha* and its *ekadāśa-bhāvas* are an integral part of *rāgānugā-bhajana*. Now that more than ample evidence has been provided to support the origins, validity and importance of these principles, we are finally prepared to go deeper into the practical details of their implementation in *rāgānugā-bhajana*.

### ***Ujjvala-nīlamanī – mādhyura-rasa* revealed**

*Ujjvala-nīlamanī* is one of the most important books for devotees aspiring for *mādhyura-rasa*. Rather than discuss the details of the complex subject matters covered in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, I will instead consider how it relates to realizing one's spiritual identity. Many details in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* are confidential, and ultimately all this information relates to one's personal *bhajana*, which is also private.

Therefore, the presentation will focus on understanding its purpose in conjunction with *rāgānugā-bhajana*. I've quoted many verses and commentaries from *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* throughout this book, so readers will be exposed to a generous sampling of its contents.

In the later chapters of *Jaiva-dharma*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura integrates a wonderfully sublime summary of *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* as part of the discussions between Vijaya and Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī. Interested readers can study Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's version or Rūpa Gosvāmī's original work, especially with the commentaries of Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī. I used the brilliant translation of *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* rendered by my Godbrother, Bhānu Svāmī.

Rūpa Gosvāmī felt that the subject of *mādhyura-rasa* was too confidential to expand fully in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, so he compiled it in a separate book. Let's first consider why Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote this book. Here's what Jīva Gosvāmī says in his commentary to the opening verse:

Rūpa Gosvāmī, the author of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, previously wrote a little about *ujjvala-rasa* (*mādhyura-rasa*), the most astonishing among all the *rasas*. Thinking he would fulfill his goal, he then produced the work called *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, manifesting the non-difference between the means of revelation and the object of revelation, in the manner that *Bhagavatam* reveals *rasa* and is *rasa* itself. In this work he describes the conjugal *rasa* in detail. UN, 1.1 commentary

Note the phrase, “manifesting the non-difference between the means of revelation and the object of revelation.” Those who require, “the means of revelation,” are practitioners (*sādhakas*)



seeking realization. *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* was, therefore, specifically written for those engaged in *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajan*.

At the end of *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, Jīva Gosvāmī gives more qualifications for a potential reader:

May *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, arising from the deep ocean of Nanda's Gokula, become qualified to serve Your ear, next to Your *makara* earring! UN, 15.260

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

This scripture arises from the ocean of Nanda's Vraja, from the women of Vraja, situated in one spot there. Or, it arises from the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, which was difficult to understand. May it become qualified to be heard (being next to the *makara* earring) by You, Kṛṣṇa.

But the phrase also indicates the work should be the object of intense worship, and that it is most secret. Thus, he has instructed that this topic should be studied by persons who have association with another person possessing this confidential *rasa*. No one should disregard following these most exalted teachers.

This work, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, revealing Kṛṣṇa's private pastimes, revealing the secret for His own viewing, being most confidential, by good fortune has nevertheless been revealed in this world by the great author Śrī Rūpa. Thus, it is visible to some.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary on the last verse:

In terms of gems, this spotless gem, arising from the impenetrable ocean of great sound, should be qualified for service localized to Kṛṣṇa. This indicates the great secret nature of the work, because it is suitable for even Kṛṣṇa to hear, which is to be taken up as the supreme priceless object by His devotees, and hidden from other people. UN, 15.261

*Ujjvala-nīlamanī* is specifically for qualified *rāgānugā-sādhakas* who are spontaneously attracted to participating in *mādhurya-rasa*, and who are at the stage of learning about their identity therein. As discussed in Chapter 1, the first of the five stages in the realization of one's eternal identity is *śravaṇa-daśā* – hearing and learning about these matters from one's *gurus* and the *ācāryas*.

As such, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* is part of *śravaṇa-daśā* and should be studied when one is ready to learn how to integrate this knowledge into one's *bhajana*, specifically in regard to the *siddha-deha* and *ekadāśa-bhāva*. Devotees who are qualified for *rāgānugā-bhakti* and who desire to enter *ujjvala-rasa*, are qualified to read *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*. Ideally, as stated by Jīva Gosvāmī, it is best to study it in the association of an advanced *rasika* Vaiṣṇava who is also aspiring for *mādhurya-rasa*.

Reading *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* before one is qualified will not yield the depth of understanding and realization necessary to benefit from its intended purpose. Premature and uninformed study can

lead to serious misconceptions and faulty application of the knowledge, and that could foster a mindset and behaviors that negatively affect one's progress in *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

Remember, Kṛṣṇa is ultimately the one who decides how much anyone will realize about His confidential affairs. We can never cheat Kṛṣṇa – only ourselves and others.

More about this from *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*:

*Madhura-rasa*, the king of all *bhakti-rasas*, which was described only briefly in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* among the chief *rasas* because of its confidential nature, is described in detail here, because this work remains confidential with the devotees. UN: 1.2

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

The author has explained that the main reason for not describing it in detail is its confidential nature:

Though this *rasa* has many components, it will be described in summary because it is difficult to describe, because it is very confidential, and because it is unsuitable for those who do not have the taste for *madhura-rasa* – because it appears similar to the *rasa* of mundane love. BRS, 3.5.2

**But, like any secret, it should be revealed to persons who are qualified. That is the meaning of this verse.** The chief *rasas* – *sānta*, *prīti*, *preyo*, *vatsala* and *ujjala* – were described in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, but *ujjala-rasa* was described only briefly. This *rasa*, called *madhura* or *ujjala*, the king of *bhakti-rasas*, is described in detail in *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*. It was previously described briefly because it is very confidential.

This *rasa* is hidden from persons opposed to the Lord, who are without taste, because they equate it with material conjugal *rasa*. Even highly respected persons are not skillful at understanding the meaning of *Bhāgavatam*. This *rasa* is also difficult for them to understand. Therefore, it should be hidden from them as well. What then to speak of materialistic people?

The main reason is that the subject is confidential. However, the reason for explaining *madhura-rasa* in this work is that it has confidential circumstances. **A secret should be attained by consideration of particular time, place, and candidate.** An ablative word can stand for a participle. Or, another meaning is that by this work the secret of the *rasa* is removed. This is indicated by the word *pr̥thak* (different). But then, what is within this work should not be revealed elsewhere.

Clearly, the main concerns are that *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* should not be given to those who are not Vaiṣṇavas, nor to those Vaiṣṇavas who don't have a specific inclination or taste for *madhura-rasa*. Secrets can be revealed to qualified devotees who are still engaged in *sādhana* and *bhajana*, and have a need to know. Those who are at the stage of *bhāva* or *prema* have already learned all the secrets.

If one is qualified to study *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* but does not have the direct personal association of another qualified *rasika* Vaiṣṇava, they can take shelter of the *ācāryas'* books and follow their guidance. In the case of *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, Vaiṣṇavas are greatly fortunate to have the commentaries of both Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī, who are among the most exalted *rasika* Vaiṣṇavas in *mādhurya-rasa*. Their combined explanations for each verse provide illuminating clarity and understanding of Rūpa Gosvāmī's statements. With the blessings of our *gurus* Kṛṣṇa within our hearts will provide the rest.

*Ujjvala-nīlamanī* contains a detailed delineation of the incredible variety of moods, characters and qualities of the *gopīs* in Goloka. The many layers and intricacies are staggering, and it offers an astonishing glimpse into the unique psychological aspects of Kṛṣṇa's personal relationships with the *gopīs* in *mādhurya līlā*. Those who have strong desires to enter this particular *rasa* must be well prepared for how things are manifest in that confidential domain and they must know exactly how they want to participate. *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* was written to provide that preparation.

The first few chapters of *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* deal with Kṛṣṇa's different male friends – His servants and cowherd boyfriends – those in *dāsyā-rasa* and the *sakhās*. Then Śrī Rūpa describes the qualities of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā to set the stage for *madhura-rasa*. Śrī Rūpa's main focus is the delineation of the numerous categories, groups, qualities, loving moods and levels of *gopīs*.

Following that, there is an analysis of the various *bhāvas* related to the different levels of *prema* that the *gopīs* manifest. It is an exhaustive study, with a level of detail that is extraordinary, and Rūpa Gosvāmī says that what he's written is just a taste of the ocean! In Chapter 6 I have provided many references from those chapters in my analysis of *bhāva, rati, prema and rasa*, along with detailed diagrams for additional clarification.

There is clearly no purpose for *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* other than to help qualified *rāgānugā-sādhakas* discover the details of their eternal Vraja *sakhī* identity within the myriad layers described therein. What other purpose could it possibly serve, and for whom? Jīva Gosvāmī established in the first commentary that *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* was “the means of revelation,” implying its use as a guide book and a tool. It is an agency or medium of revelation, and it is also the written encapsulation of that very truth itself.

Your understanding and realizations of *mādhurya-rasa* before and after reading *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* will be dramatically and vastly different. Especially reading it with both commentaries. You will never think of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* the same way again. It is transformative in every sense of the word.

As devotees with intense desires study these details about the *gopīs*, their hearts will be spontaneously attracted to some aspects and not others. Because *rāgānugā-bhakti* is based solely on personal taste and natural attraction, the details of your identity as outlined by the *ekadāśa-bhāvas* will further expand spontaneously by such study. Examples will be given throughout the next section, *The ekadāśa-bhāvas of the siddha-deha*.

For those devotees who aspire to be *priya-sakhīs* or *nitya-sakhīs*, within the layers of details revealed in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* are the seeds of their eternal personality, character, emotions and qualities, directly correlating to the eleven elements of their *siddha-deha* identities. *Rāgānugā-*

*bhakti* is fueled by intense desires, and *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* provides the nourishing details that will help aspirants refine, focus and expand their desires in relation to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and participation in Their *līlā*.

All of this additional definition then directly translates into more focused and lucid meditations (*smaraṇam*) in one's *siddha-deha* in *mānasi-sevā* – service performed within the mind. Thus, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* plays a most critical role in the realization and manifestation of your eternal identity, for those who desire to enter *mādhurya-rasa*.

### **The *ekadāśa-bhāvas* of the *siddha-deha* – your Vraja personality profile**

Now I'll examine each of the eleven items of *ekadāśa-bhāva* in detail and discuss their integration with your *siddha-deha*. According to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, the *guru* should not impose an arbitrary identity on a disciple. The *guru* discusses these details with a qualified disciple in an effort to determine what is already manifesting naturally within his or her heart, arising from the awakening of spiritual greed.

They collaborate to decide on the most appropriate implementation according to the disciple's personal inclinations. Changes can and should be made if necessary. This is the most pragmatic approach in my opinion, especially for contemporary Vaiṣṇavas. Of course, those whose *gurus* are from other lineages with different specific methods should follow their *guru's* guidance.

This personal interactive arrangement between *guru* and disciple is the ideal situation. Those qualified devotees whose *dīkṣā-guru* is no longer physically present, and who have not yet encountered an experienced and compatible *śikṣā-guru* with whom they can discuss these details and obtain personal guidance, are left with no choice but to deal with these matters on their own. I believe this is perfectly acceptable given the unique circumstances facing many contemporary Vaiṣṇavas.

Of course, from a transcendental perspective, the *guru* is always with the disciple, so “on your own” isn't entirely accurate. As Śrīla Prabhupāda stated in a previous section, “the *guru* will give [internal guidance about your identity]... When you reach that level, *guru* will give” even if he is not physically present. Therefore, praying for your *guru's* blessings and guidance, you should first take shelter of the previous *ācāryas'* teachings (our *śikṣā-gurus*) on these subjects as we are doing here, supported by the enlightenment you will always receive from Kṛṣṇa, your best friend and *guru* within. *Śāstras*, *gurus*, *sadhus*...

If applicable, you should also pray to your Deities for Their blessings and guidance in this highly confidential matter. If you are completely honest, sincere and genuinely qualified, profuse manifestations of approval will quickly appear with unequivocal clarity, inspirational encouragement and full support. There is absolutely nothing mechanical about this process – it is the incredible experience of your eternal identity and life beginning to manifest within, completely and directly by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, which you obtain through the compassionate blessings of your *dīkṣā* and *śikṣā gurus*.

The *siddha-deha* is the spiritual genesis of your new eternal identity in direct contrast to your temporary material identity, which is comprised of the subtle body and physical body. The subtle body is where your self-conception and current identity are forged and subsequently manifest through your physical body, the root of which is your false ego. The subtle body's identity was created by a combination of material desires and impressions (*samskāras*) accumulated over countless lifetimes.

Applying the same principles, the *siddha-deha* is created by the force of your spiritual desires and impressions that manifest within the course of engaging in *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*. The *siddha-deha* is the transcendental medium with which you manifest your new eternal identity and which is suitable for a relationship with Kṛṣṇa during internal meditation. It is the subtle seed of your eternal identity (*svarūpa-siddhi*) eventually bestowed by Kṛṣṇa upon attaining *bhāva*.

Every *jīva* has a *svarūpa*, an eternal inherent personal nature, and the *siddha-deha* is the first manifestation of your eternal *svarūpa*, because it is developed from your own deeply personal desires and loving propensities towards Kṛṣṇa, which begin to manifest as you progress through the final stages of *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*. It is a completely natural and spontaneous process guided directly by Kṛṣṇa.

The *ekadāśa-bhāvas* are the defining characteristics of your *siddha-deha*. They bring it to life, so to speak, by giving it a contextual connection to *vraja-līlā*, specifically the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*. You cannot engage in serious meditation on *vraja-līlā* as an anonymous phantom observer with no form or sense of personal identity, and absolutely not as your material identity. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains this in his notes to the *ekadāśa-bhāva* verse in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*:

One whose natural tendency is to cultivate the conjugal *rasa* should definitely adopt the female form and attitude of a *gopī* in Vṛndāvana. No living entity can enter the conjugal mood of Vraja in a masculine mood or body. Only when one has adopted the identity as a *gopī* can he truly worship Kṛṣṇa. This identity is composed of eleven aspects. Thus, only one who has adopted these eleven attitudes can be said to have taken a *gopī* identity. HC, 15.58  
Notes

These eleven components of your *siddha-deha* do not represent the complete manifestation of your new identity – they are the seed elements. The first fully transcendental manifestation of your spiritual identity takes place at the stage of *bhāva* when you attain *svarūpa-siddhi*. Then, when you finally leave your physical and subtle bodies and take birth in Kṛṣṇa's manifest *līlā*, the full context of your identity will be established – *vastu-siddhi* – as described in Chapter 1 by Viśvanātha Cakravartī.

The *ekadāśa-bhāvas* were presented by Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī in his *smaraṇa-paddhati* in a particular order that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura changed when he wrote about it in his books. For instance, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda felt that *sambandha* was the most important item, so he listed it first. Following his thoughtful considerations, I have taken it a step further and divided the *ekadāśa-bhāvas* into three self-evident categories: relational, physical and activities.

But first, let's hear what is most likely one of the earliest written descriptions of *ekadāśa-bhāva* from *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*. I have chosen to list the Sanskrit names first in this particular instance and I have maintained the order as presented by Śrīla Dhyānacandra.

The particular characteristics of all these are now described, beginning with the name.

**Nāma** – Her name shall be one similar to that of Śrī Rūpa-mañjarī and the other *vraja-gopīs*.

**Rūpa** – Her complexion (or form) is like that of Śrī Rādhā, who excites *kāma* in Śrī Kṛṣṇa and enchants the three worlds. This meditation should be done with diligence.

**Vayas** – The beautiful *vraja-gopīs* are of various ages, but the thirteenth year is an especially sweet time of youth, so that is the age to be contemplated.

**Veśa** – One should meditate on the *gopī-deha* as being dressed in beautiful blue garments that are adorned with multicolored ornaments.

**Sambandha** – The relationship between the *mañjarī* and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is that of servant and served. The *mañjarī* would not give up that relationship even in exchange for her own life.

**Yūtha** – Just as Rādhikā's *sakhīs* always remain near Her in great devotion, similarly the *mañjarī* is enchanted by Śrī Rādhā and always remains near to Her.

**Ājñā** – Taking the order of her group leader on her head, she very happily renders appropriate services to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

**Sevā** – The *sevā* is divided into two classes: (1) obeying all kinds of orders (doing the needful), and (2) more specifically, a particular service like fanning with a *camara*, and so on, which the *sādhaka* personally desires.

**Parākāṣṭhā** – The meditation shall be: “Just as Śrī Rūpa-mañjarī and the other *gopīs* are *nitya-sakhīs* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, I, too, am a *nitya-sakhī*”

**Pālyadāsī** – The *sādhaka-mañjarī* remains always under the shelter of a *nitya-sakhī* who is similar in nature to herself, who speaks very sweetly, and who maintains her in every respect.

**Nivāsa** – Those delightful places such as Vamśivaṭa, Nandīśvara and Vraja, which are the sites of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's daily pastimes, are the dwelling places of the *siddha-deha*. GGSP, 94-104

Obviously, this application of the *ekadāśa-bhāvas* is directly intended for those who desire to be *mañjarīs*, especially serving under Rūpa-mañjarī and Lalitā. Because Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī is Lalitā, this is not at all surprising. These details provide unprecedented insider guidance for entering Lalitā's group (*gana*).

Not surprisingly, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (Kamalā-mañjarī) also described *ekadāśa-bhāva* in the context of one aspiring to be a *mañjarī* (*nitya-sakhī*). My descriptions follow theirs in general, but I will also expand upon each of the eleven characteristics in more detail to include their application for those desiring to be *priya-sakhīs*, as well as other *rasas*.

The *ekadāśa-bhāvas* provide the necessary aspects of your identity for the specific purpose of meditation on *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*. It is an evolutionary process that unfolds slowly and gradually once the seeds are planted. Now I'll discuss each of the eleven *bhāvas* in more detail for a deeper understanding. I'll also show how *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* plays a part in this process, as I mentioned in the previous section.

Keep in mind that this information and my explanations are all derived from the *ācāryas'* books, and these are the things you would discuss with your *guru* or a *rasika* devotee who is guiding you. If no personal guide is available, this information is a good starting point for understanding the details of your *ekadāśa-bhāvas* and how to incorporate them in your *bhajana*. A careful study of the referenced books is essential to fully comprehend this subject. Consider this a study guide.

### Relational (3)...

#### (1) A specific relationship with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in *vraja-līlā* – *sambandha*

Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī described *sambandha* as relating to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura describes it as relating only to Rādhā, because he is focused on a *mañjarī* relationship. For those desiring to be *priya-sakhīs* there is also a connection with Kṛṣṇa unlike the very young *mañjarīs*, who have no desires to interact directly with Kṛṣṇa.

I went into great depth in the sections on choosing your *rasa* and *mañjarī-bhāva*, and we learned from *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* that, for those desiring to participate in *mādhurya-rasa*, there are two ways to enter Rādhā's group: to be one of Her *nitya-sakhīs* (*mañjarīs*) or one of Her *priya-sakhīs*. We learned that *mañjarīs* have more affection (*asama-snehā*) for Rādhā than they do for Kṛṣṇa and *priya-sakhīs* have equal affection (*sama-snehā*), which ebbs and flows between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Those aspiring for *mādhurya-rasa* must absolutely study *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* because there is no other way to learn about the incredible details of this highest *rasa*. Rūpa Gosvāmī has mercifully opened the door to this confidential realm of intimate relationships with Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā and the other *gopīs*. Learning about the various types of relationships in *mādhurya-rasa* will inspire an eager devotee in unprecedented ways, with a continuous flood of realizations and desires.

Both *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* (in the first several chapters) contain similar information about the other three main *rasas* – *dāsyā*, *sakhya* and *vātsalya*. Those desiring to participate in those *rasas* can study the relevant sections of those books to learn about the different types of relationships available within those *rasas*.

Your relationship will eventually evolve into your permanent dominant mood or loving disposition – *sthāyī-bhāva* – which will be discussed in the next chapter. *Sthāyī-bhāva* is the core component of your identity and mode of interaction with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. *Sambandha* is the conceptual origin of your *sthāyī-bhāva*. It is nourished and developed by following these same aspects of your chosen Vraja associate. This applies to all *rasas*.

**(2) Entry into the group of one of Rādhā’s eight primary sakhīs, whom you’ve chosen to accept as your guide – *yūtha***

Those desiring to enter *mādhurya-rasa* must enter Rādhā’s group (*yūtha*), because She is the *yūthesvarī*, the leader of Her group. Entry into Rādhā’s group is accomplished by being accepted into one of the groups headed by each of Her eight principal *sakhīs*: Lalitā, Viśākhā, Citrā, Campakalatā, Tuṅgavidyā, Indulekhā, Raṅgadevī and Sudevī.

This particular relational aspect of *ekadāśa-bhāva* describes your initial position in the hierarchy within the *gopī* community in Vraja. In *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* the many layers of this hierarchy of *gopī-ganas* are described in detail. Each of the eight main groups have many sub divisions, but at this stage you need only focus on following your chosen *aṣṭa-sakhī* mentor.

Those desiring to enter *sakhya-rasa*, will follow their respective chosen mentors within the groups of cowherd boys as described in *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* and *Rādhā-kṛṣṇa-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā*. So some may follow Śrīdāmā, or Subala and so on.

**(3) The mood of a completely dependent maidservant of Rādhā under the tutelage of one of Her eight principal *sakhīs* – *pālyadāsī***

This relational aspect deals with one’s basic mood and mindset within one’s chosen group, which for *mañjarīs* is to be a completely dependent maidservant. *Priya-sakhīs* have relationships with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa that are beyond being a young maidservant, such as being a girlfriend, although they also render services as well. These details are all revealed in *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*.

In any case, one should cultivate the feelings of being completely dependent on one’s chosen *sakhī* leader, and take shelter of her for guidance. And, as Viśvanātha Cakravartī stated in an earlier section, one should have equal love for Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa, and one’s chosen *aṣṭa-sakhī* mentor. Equal love means the same intensity and quality, not the same *type* of love. The principles regarding dedication and love towards your group leader apply to those desiring other *rasas*.

**Physical (5)...**

**(4) A name – *nāma***

As we have read, in many cases the *guru* gives the disciple the name of their eternal identity in the *līlā*. In other instances, it is selected based on which *vraja-vāsī* you have chosen to follow.



Those who are not receiving direct guidance in these matters from a *dīkṣā-guru* or *śikṣā-guru* may either select a suitable name of their own choice, or wait for it to be revealed. Many *ācāryas* and *gurus* in the Gauḍīya lineages have the same *siddha* names, and there are no issues with this.

### (5) Age – *vayas*

In *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* there are descriptions of the physical characteristics of the four age groups of the *sakhīs*: *vayaḥ-sandhi*, *navya*, *vyakta*, *pūrṇa*. These four groups range from the junction of childhood and youth (*vayaḥ-sandhi*), ages 11 - 12, to fully developed (*pūrṇa*) young girls aged 15 - 16. *Mañjarīs* tend to be adolescent girls in the 11 - 13 age range. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura revealed in several books that his age as a *mañjarī* is 12 years, 6 months and 10 days old – eternally.

On the other hand, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has some very interesting insights into this aspect of *ekadāśa-bhāva*. From *Jaiva-dharma*:

Vijaya: ...Now that I have understood *sambandha*, please tell me about *vayas* (age).

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: The *sambandha* that you have established with Kṛṣṇa has resulted in your unprecedented and unparalleled intrinsic *svarūpa* of a *vraja-gopī*. Now, to render service in that *svarūpa*, you need to have a suitable age (*vayas*). The appropriate age is *kaiśora* (the age from ten to sixteen), also known as *vayaḥ-sandhi*.

In your *svarūpa*, you will begin from the age of ten, and grow up to sixteen years. *Vraja-lalanā*'s do not have the three ages of *bālya* (infancy, ages 0 – 5), *paugāṇḍa* (childhood, ages 5 – 10), and *vṛddha* (adulthood), so you should always foster the spiritual identification of being a *kiśorī*.

In other places, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has said that one's age is fixed eternally as with Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. In any case, according to one's desired relationships with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, one should choose a suitable age. In all of the *ācāryas*' writings, *mañjarīs* are almost always very young girls, whereas Rādhā's other *sakhīs* have ages that span a much wider range, but never older than sixteen.

It all depends on how you see yourself participating in the *līlā* in terms of your specific relationships with both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. These kinds of details may also be adjusted over time according to the evolution of your self-conception. All of these principles apply to those desiring *sakhya-rasa* and the other *rasas* as well.

### (6) Physical appearance, i.e., the color of your complexion and other attributes of your desired bodily form – *rūpa*

Once again, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* is an invaluable resource for further defining your eternal identity, because the subject of the physical attributes and variegated beauty of the *Vraja gopīs* is described there in great detail, providing ample inspiration to expand these features.

Your chosen age will also be an obvious factor in your physical appearance, because young *mañjarīs* are typically in the beginning stages of puberty (11-13), whereas the older *sakhīs* (14-16), such as the *priya-sakhīs* and *aṣṭa-sakhīs* are much more developed and mature both physically and emotionally.

What we hear from Dhyānacandra and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda both are that one should desire a very beautiful form for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. That is the basic concept, and the details will be expanded for each individual by studying *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, and trusting your own inclinations (*ruci*). In *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* there are also descriptions of the physical characteristics of the various young boys in *dāsya-rasa* and *sakhya-rasa* in Vraja.

### (7) A dress of a particular style and color – *veśa*

When you read the descriptions of the *gopīs* in the various books by the *ācāryas*, they almost always use the same approach when describing them. They mention the color of their complexion, the color and style of their dress, along with other personal attributes.

This aspect (*veśa*) is simply adding the necessary details to your physical form, which further expresses your individuality and uniqueness – all according to your desires and natural inclinations. This also enhances your meditations in your *siddha-deha*, because obviously you have to visualize yourself clothed. This item of *ekadāśa-bhāva* can be easily adapted and applied to other desired *rasas*.

### (8) A place of residence, your private *kuñja*, typically within the personal *kuñja* of your *aṣṭa-sakhī* mentor – *vāsa*

First we'll hear from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura from *Jaiva-dharma*:

Vijaya: What is *vāsa* (residence)?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: To reside in Vraja eternally – this is *vāsa*. You should realize your identity as a *gopī* who is born in the house of some *gopa* in one of the villages of Vraja, and you have been married to a *gopa* of some other village of Vraja. However, the sweet sound of Kṛṣṇa's *muralī* has captivated you.

Śrīmatī Rādhikā's confidential *sakhī* has taken you under her guidance and has appointed a place of residence for you in a beautiful *kuṭīra* in a grove on the bank of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. The residence that you have realized internally, by your intrinsic spiritual identity, is your true *vāsa*. Your *parakīya-bhāva* is actually your *nitya-siddha-bhāva*. JD, Chapter 39, Page 843

All around Rādhā-kuṇḍa, at the eight major compass points, are the expansive private gardens of each of the *aṣṭa-sakhīs*. These are all described in Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī's *paddhati*, as well as in Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Govinda-līlāmṛta*. Based on your chosen *sakhī* leader, you will reside in your *siddha-deha* identity in a private *kuñja* within her garden, in a suitable cottage.

As was explained by Viśvanātha Cakravartī in Chapter 1 in the section about the *jīva*'s origins debate, after attaining *bhāva* and the first stages of *prema*, you will then take birth in Kṛṣṇa's earthly *līlā*, from the womb of a *nitya-siddha gopī*, and that will be your eternal form and identity (*vastu-siddhi*) in *vraja-līlā*. You will be a member of that family until you grow up and get married to a *gopa* and move to his home and village. This establishes the basis for *parakīya-bhāva*, the special relationship Kṛṣṇa has with the *gopīs* who are married to others.

Activities (3)...

### (9) Orders from your *sakhī* for different services – *ājñā*

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda expands on Dhyānacandra's original statement:

Vijaya: Now, please tell me about *ājñā* (specific orders).

Gosvāmī: There are two types of *ājñā*: *nitya* and *naimittika*. Your *nitya-ājñā* is whatever [specific orders] your compassionate *sakhī* has bestowed upon you regarding your *sevā* during the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, and you must continue to render it regularly at that particular time, without any negligence.

Apart from that, from time to time, she may give you [specific orders] about other services when the necessity arises, and this is called *naimittika-ājñā* (occasional orders). You should also attend to these services with the utmost diligence. JD, Chapter 39, Page 843

This explanation specifically applies to *mañjarīs*, who are rendering services in the mood of young maidservants, too young to have the type of mature friendships that the older *sakhīs* have with each other. That is not their dominant mood or even among their secondary moods. The many different moods and relational interactions of Rādhā's *sakhīs* will be quite apparent after thoroughly studying the *līlā* books and *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*.

We should always keep in mind that all relationships with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are potentially unlimited in their scope, even though they might focus regularly on certain preferred activities and services. *Priya-sakhīs* will also take orders from their *sakhī* leader, but their mood is not one of a young maidservant, because they are not at all like the *mañjarīs* in any way. Therefore, the scope of their relationships is much different. Naturally, you will always be mindful and respectful of the group hierarchies among the *sakhīs*, but *mādhurya līlā* is anything but rigid and formal. It is truly unlimited in scope and variety.

### (10) A specific regular service according to your heart's desires – *sevā*

Dhyānacandra wrote:

The *sevā* is divided into two classes: (1) obeying all kinds of orders (doing the needful), and (2) more specifically, a particular service like fanning with a *camara*, and so on, which the *sādhaka* personally desires.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura doesn't mention two types of *sevā*, but expands upon it fully in the context of a *mañjarī*, because Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī is speaking to Vijaya, whose desire is to be a *mañjarī*:

Vijaya: Kindly give more specific details about my *sevā* (service).

Gosvāmī: You are a maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and your eternal service is to render loving service unto Her. Sometimes, out of necessity, She may send you to be alone with Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a solitary place, and at that time, Kṛṣṇa may express His desire to enjoy with you. However, you should never agree to His proposals.

You are a *dāsī* of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and you never independently serve Kṛṣṇa for His pleasure without Her permission. You have equal loving attachment for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, but still you should maintain greater earnestness for Her loving service (*dāsya-prema*) than for Kṛṣṇa's.

This is the meaning of *sevā*. Your *sevā* is to care for Śrī Rādhikā's comfort and pleasure in all the eight-fold pastimes of the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*. Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has presented the outline of your service in *Śrī Vilāpa-kusumāñjalī*, based on Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara's treatise. JD, Chapter 39, Page 843

These are clear-cut details specifically for those desiring to be *mañjarīs* and not *priya-sakhīs*. As always, the overriding principle to understand is that you should meditate on services and activities that are in accordance with your desired *rasa*, personal aspirations and natural inclinations. This applies to all four *rasas*. The prayers of the *ācāryas* expressing their desires for service show that you can and should desire a wide range of opportunities to engage with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in their *līlā*.

### (11) The ambition to fulfill a very special desire – *parākāṣṭhā*

From *Jaiva-dharma*:

Vijaya: How can the *parākāṣṭhā-śvāsa* (the utmost summit of sentiments, and the very breath of the aspirant) be ascertained?

Gosvāmī: Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has explained *parākāṣṭhā* in the following two *ślokas* from *Vilāpa-kusumāñjalī*, 102-103:

Hā Varoru Rādhe, I am spending my days in great distress, maintaining the highest expectation of attaining the ocean of nectar. Now please bestow Your kindness upon me, for if You do not do so, what is the use of my life, my residence in Vraja, or even my servitude to Kṛṣṇa? All will be completely in vain.

Hā! Gokulacandra! Hā! Kṛṣṇa, with a smiling, blissful, lotus face! Hā! You whose heart is soft and melting, wanting to bestow mercy on all! Kindly take me where You lovingly take Śrīmatī Rādhikā and sport with Her eternally, and allow me to render confidential, loving service to You both. JD, Chapter 39, Page 844

Those who desire to be *nitya-sakhī mañjarīs* are very fortunate to have ample detailed instructions to guide their way. Those who desire to be *priya-sakhīs* of Rādhā, or any of the other three *rasas*, should implement the template of *ekadāśa-bhāva* by applying the underlying principles discussed here, and substitute the particular aspects of their desired *rasa* that are suitable for each of the eleven items. That is the process recommended by the *ācāryas*.

The *ekadāśa-bhāvas* are the basic components of a Vraja identity profile, but the technicalities must fade into the background and allow the personal aspects to predominate naturally and eventually completely. This new identity gives us entry into the pastimes in a clearly defined and personal way, thus avoiding unwanted and dangerous speculative deviations. It gives us a repository for our emerging spiritual desires and focuses our *bhajana* in the most direct way possible.

As I stated before, you literally have to desire your way into *vraja-līlā*, and the first desires are related to your eternal identity. You are the one who has to define how you want to be personally integrated into Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. Every aspect of your participation must be self-conceived, following your own inherent nature, and saturated with sincere desire to the level of greed and intense longing. If one has no desires for these things, then what will Kṛṣṇa fulfill?

Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains this in his commentary in *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*:

The supreme Lord has no favorite and no dearest friend, nor does He consider anyone undesirable, despicable or fit to be neglected. All the same, He lovingly reciprocates with His devotees in whatever manner they worship Him, just as the trees of heaven fulfill the desires of whoever approaches them. SB, 10.38.22

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

The words *yathā tathā* mean that Kṛṣṇa responds to His devotees according to how they worship Him. This is in accordance with His statement: "As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly." (BG, 4.11)

The words *sura-drumo yadvad* (like a heavenly desire tree) indicate how the various degrees of fruits awarded correspond to the various degrees of shelter taken. As there is no discrepancy if the *kalpa-vṛkṣa* (desire tree) does not give fruits to a person who does not take shelter of it, similarly it is so in the case of the Supreme Lord. However, whereas the Lord is dependent upon His surrendered devotees, the *kalpa-vṛkṣa* is not dependent on those who take shelter of it. Therefore, according to the devotion, Kṛṣṇa shows friendship, enmity or neutrality.

The *siddha-deha* and its *ekadāśa-bhāvas* are a core part of the esoteric spiritual science of *bhakti*. underlying a process that is ultimately inspired by sincere love, attachment and deep longing. The *siddha-deha* is the foundation and starting point of your identity transformation, because your identity will gradually be more focused internally on your *siddha-deha* and proportionately less on your temporary external identity, until you finally attain your desired eternal identity.

From Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's notes to the *ekadāśa-bhāva* verse in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*:

Whatever one's identity in this world, one should internally adopt a spiritual identity in these eleven aspects and worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa directly in that form. HC, 15.58

### ***Aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇam* – be there now**

All Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas have read the tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* wherein Kṛṣṇa's earthly pastimes are presented in great detail. Those stories are legendary in India and now worldwide. Throughout the course of our journey in this book, we have heard the term *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* repeatedly, especially in conjunction with meditation in one's *siddha-deha* – the two are inextricably intertwined.

Although Kṛṣṇa's earthly pastimes in Gokula Vṛndāvana cycle eternally within the limitless material universes and are completely transcendental, nonetheless, they include certain activities that are not displayed in the unmanifest eternal pastimes in Goloka Vṛndāvana, the highest transcendental realm.

These activities include the killing of various demons, as well as Kṛṣṇa leaving Vṛndāvana to live in Mathurā and then Dvārakā. In the transcendental realm, Kṛṣṇa eternally resides simultaneously in all three places. Kṛṣṇa, in His original primary form, never leaves Goloka Vraja – ever. It is there that He is immersed eternally in the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* with His most confidential loving associates.

The *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* represents the framework within which these eternal pastimes unfold. Because it has been stated repeatedly that Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are unlimitedly variegated, it can therefore be concluded that what we read in the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* books of the *ācāryas* is just a sample of what's in store for those fortunate devotees who achieve the supreme goal of Vraja *prema*.

Naturally, the question of qualifications arises once again, along with when and how this meditation should be approached. It should be clear enough by now that one who is qualified for *rāgānugā-bhakti* is qualified for this meditation which is the basis for internal *rāgānugā-bhajana*. Once one has established the *ekadāśa-bhāvas* of one's *siddha-deha* one is ready to begin, since that is the intended purpose.

However, as we will learn in the last section of this chapter, the third stage in the realization of your eternal identity is *Smaraṇa-daśā* – remembering – also has five evolutionary stages of gradually intensifying meditation, up to the final stage of *samādhi*. *Samādhi* is only possible during the later stages of *āsakti*, leading to *bhāva*. *Samādhi* cannot be induced mechanically or prematurely. Therefore, in the beginning of this practice, during the stages of *niṣṭhā* and *ruci*, these meditations will not be as focused, immersive or continuous.

In the first stage of *Smarāṇa-daśā*, one may “think about” the various *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā* according to the time of day when such remembrances occur, such as during *japa*. Eventually, “thinking about” becomes considered contemplation. That then morphs into focused meditation and *mānasi-sevā* in one’s *siddha-deha*, which continues to intensify up to *samādhi*. Only at the stage of *bhāva* can meditation in *samādhi* be continuous throughout the day and night.

This is one aspect of *bhajana* that cannot and should not be artificially imposed by mental gymnastics. The *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā* will be revealed gradually as one progresses through these final stages of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, solely by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and not otherwise. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains this in *Jaiva-dharma*:

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: ...One should continue to perform *bhajana* and be satisfied with whatever realization of the transcendental reality is bestowed upon him according to his qualification (*adhikāra*) – this is really Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s instruction. If we sincerely adhere to His instructions, in due course of time He will surely bestow on us His causeless mercy, through which we can have the full vision of His *divya-līlā*.

Now Vijaya Kumara became completely free from doubt in every respect. He fully awoke to his innate disposition and skillfully dovetailed all the *ekadāśa-bhāvas* in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. JD, Chapter 40, Page 865

In eager anticipation of these more advanced stages of *bhajana*, we should understand that there is a whole new world waiting for us, and it is accessed internally, within our hearts. Our participation in that world is available at any time. Imagine being able to sit and meditate in a quiet place and instantly not only “see” Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā*, but actually enter into it in our eternal spiritual form.

Would we do it? Of course we would! Would we ever want to stop doing it? Of course we wouldn’t! This is the highest perfection of *līlā-smaraṇam* in *samādhi*, one of the mature fruits of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, and it is critical to our progress in practice, as well as being part of the goal. The experiences just described are typical of devotees who are at the stage of deep *āsakti* or *bhāva*. Haridāsa Ṭhākura explains this to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*:

When one’s meditation on one’s identity becomes fixed in *samādhi*, then the stage of full appropriation of that identity comes about. HC, 15.94

The practitioner’s state of being at that time.

At that time, identification with one’s spiritual form, entirely overcomes the influence of the material body. After achieving this state, one is at every moment present in that form in Vraja, where one sees the Vṛndāvana forests through that form that one has made his own. HC, 15.95-96

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's notes:

In the stage of appropriation, one's sense of identity with the external material body is abandoned and one's identification with the spiritual identity and form takes over. At this stage, one resides constantly in Vraja in one's original spiritual form.

As one is now engaged in serving Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in that identity, one experiences the dawning of a great pleasure. As such, one remains absorbed in visions of Vṛndāvana *dhāma*, one feels completely fixed in the spiritual identity and has visions of the Divine Couple's transcendental pastimes as if they had become manifest.

Once again, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's verse sums up the process:

Remembrance of the Lord's pastimes is the life and soul of the devotee. Remembering the sweet loving pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is the essence of all the processes. This is the goal of life, as well as the best means of achieving the goal. PBC, 61

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

This is the essence of all instructions regarding rules and regulations. The remembrance of the pastimes of the Lord is the only process for achieving the goal of one's life, relishing the transcendental [*rasas*] of the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. **There is no higher goal or process than this. The remembrance of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is the essence of all instructions given in the scriptures.**

As was said before, if we want to be with Kṛṣṇa in the future, then we have to take the time to be with Kṛṣṇa now in the present – literally, in the moment. The more time we spend with Kṛṣṇa now, the stronger the likelihood of being with Him in the future. It's as simple as that. Wherever the heart and mind are focused, is where we will eventually go, either materially or spiritually.

Thus, for Vaiṣṇavas, the saying is not, 'Be *here* now', it's, 'Be *there* now!'

Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī's *Śrī Śrī Rādhā-kṛṣṇāṣṭa-kāliya-līlā-smaraṇa-krama-paddhati*, is an addendum to his *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*. It focuses on meditations in one's *siddha-deha* within *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā-smaraṇam*. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has included excerpts of these two *paddhatis* in the final chapters of *Jaiva-dharma*.

Once again, this is concrete validation of the authenticity, purposes and application of these *paddhatis* for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Adding to that, the conversation quoted in the *paddhati* and presented by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, is between Lord Śiva and Nārada Muni, two of the most highly regarded Vaiṣṇavas in the universe. The implications of these facts should be blatantly obvious to any thoughtful person.



From *Jaiva-dharma*:

Vijaya: Prabhu, I understand that there are two types of *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, namely *prakāṣa* (manifest) and *aprakāṣa* (unmanifest), but that they are still one and the same *tattva*. Now, please explain to me the types of *prakāṣa-vraja-līlā*.

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: There are two types of *prakāṣa-vraja-līlā*: *nitya* (eternal) and *naimittika* (occasional). The Vraja pastimes that take place during the eight periods of the day and night (*aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*) are actually *nitya-līlā*, whereas Kṛṣṇa's killing Putana, and His long sojourn away from Vraja in Mathurā and Dvārakā, are *naimittika-līlās*.

Vijaya: Prabhu, please instruct me about the *nitya-līlā*.

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: We find two types of descriptions: one by the ṛṣis and the other by the Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. Which of these would you like to hear?

Vijaya: I would like to hear the description in the *śloka*s that the ṛṣis have composed.

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: The *aṣṭa-kālīya-sūtra* says: The eight time periods of the day shall be known in this sequence:<sup>5</sup>

- (1) *niśānta* – end of night
- (2) *prātaḥ* – morning
- (3) *purvāhna* – forenoon
- (4) *madhyāhna* – midday
- (5) *aparāhna* – afternoon
- (6) *sāyam* – early evening
- (7) *pradoṣa* – nightfall
- (8) *rātri* – night

The *madhyāhna* and *rātri* time periods each last for six *muhūrta* (4 hours, 48 minutes) and the others all last for three *muhūrtas* each (2 hours, 24 minutes). (1 *muhūrta* = 48 minutes)

Śrī Sadāśiva has explained this *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* in *Sanat-kumāra-saṁhitā*. He has specified which services are to be rendered at particular times of the day, in accordance with the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*. Thus, one should remember the appropriate *līlā* at the appropriate time.

Vijaya: Prabhu, may I please hear the statements of Jagad-guru Sadāśiva?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: Listen carefully:

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<sup>5</sup> I have reformatted this part of the text into a list and have expanded it slightly from the original text in *Jaiva-dharma*, which comes directly from the *Śrī Śrī Rādhā-kṛṣṇāṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇa-krama-paddhati* of Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī. The adjustments were incorporating additional time related details from the *paddhati*.

Sadāsiva said, “Śrī Hari’s beloved damsels in Vraja, who have the sentiments of *parakīya-bhāva* (paramour) towards Him, please the darling of their hearts with profuse moods of *divya-prema*.

He Nārada! You should contemplate your *ātma-svarūpa* (*siddha-deha*) in the following manner. You are a *kīṣorī* (pre-adolescent) *gopī* and you reside in the very heart of transcendental Vṛndāvana, amidst the beloved damsels of Kṛṣṇa, who are endowed with paramour sentiment for Him. You have a charming youthful form, and enchanting, intoxicating beauty.

You are accomplished in many fine arts for Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. Yet even if Kṛṣṇa earnestly requests to meet with you, you are ever averse to pleasure unrelated to the pleasure of your *Svāminī* (Rādhā).

You are the maidservant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s most beloved consort Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and are wholly and exclusively dedicated to Her *sevā*. You always have more *prema* for Śrī Rādhikā than for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. [this is the *asama-snehā* of *nitya-sakhī mañjarīs*]

Everyday with much endeavor you arrange for the youthful couple’s meeting, and remain forever content with the ecstatic bliss of Their service.

Thus, while conceiving of your *ātma-svarūpa* in this particular way, you should painstakingly render *mānasi-sevā* (service within the mind) in transcendental Vṛndāvana from *brāhma-muhūrta* to the end of *niśānta-līlā* (pastimes at night’s end).” JD, Chapter 38, Pages 813-815

In Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī’s *aṣṭa-kālīya-smaraṇa paddhati*, in the verses that follow the above conversation, Nārada then asks Lord Śiva about the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, and Lord Śiva directs him to Vṛndā devī for instructions:

Śrī Nārada said, “I truly want to hear about the *aṣṭa-kāla-līlā* of Śrī Hari, because without knowing the *līlā*, how can anyone perform *mānasi-sevā*?” Śrī Sadasiva replied, “Actually, I don’t really understand *Hari-līlā*. You should approach Śrī Vṛndā devī; she can describe it to you. She is a maidservant of Śrī Govinda, and is nearby in a place close to Keśī-tīrtha, along with the other *sakhīs*.”

After hearing the words of his *guru*, that most virtuous sage Śrī Nārada circumambulated him and repeatedly offered his obeisance. Then he went to see Śrī Vṛndā devī. Upon seeing Nārada, Vṛndā devī offered her obeisance and said to him, “Why have you come here?”

Nārada answered, “I want to hear about Śrī Hari’s *nitya-līlā* from you. O Beautiful One, if I am worthy to know it, please describe everything to me.” Śrī Vṛndā replied, “O Nārada, you are a *kṛṣṇa-bhakta*. You are certainly worthy to hear. I shall describe this secret to you, but you must not repeat it in just any place, because it is most confidential and sublime.” RKSP, 15-21

Going back to the section in *Jaiva-dharma* quoted before, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura then presents a summary of the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* as it is written in Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī's *Śrī Śrī Rādhā-kṛṣṇāṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇa-krama-paddhati*. It is a direct word for word transcription of that entire section. Further proof of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's commitment to these books, as well as the validity and importance of their instructions.

In the next section, **Meditation in your *siddha-deha***, I will explore these specific processes in greater detail. Meditations on *kṛṣṇa-līlā* for extended periods gradually and slowly manifests during the stage of *āsakti*. Hearing and discussing these pastimes is the perfect stimulus for meditation at any stage, and those two *aṅgas* of *sādhana* continue eternally. The *līlā* books were written specifically for the purpose of enhancing *līlā-smaraṇam* in *rāgānugā-bhajana*.

To end this section, I have included a summary of the eight pastime periods, taken from Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Govinda-līlāmṛta*, to provide a summary of the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*. Readers are encouraged to read the *līlā* books I have referenced for the full nectarean details.

### ***Aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇa-mangala-stotram***<sup>6</sup>

#### **1. *Nisānta-līlā* – Dawn (end of night) Pastimes: 3:22 a.m. to 5:46 a.m.**

I remember Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa at the close of night. Vṛndā, who was attending Them, was not happy at that moment, knowing that before dawn the Divine Couple would separate Themselves. However, she did her duty. She prompted the parrot and the myna to sing many pleasing songs. These songs awakened Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, who rose from Their bed of bliss.

Their female friends observed Them looking very charming because of the deep love and affection They shared at that time. Both were suspicious about the voice of a she-monkey, and although They desired to continue Their mutual association They left that place for Their own residences, where They occupied Their own beds.

#### **2. *Prātaḥ-līlā* – Morning Pastimes: 5:46 a.m. to 8:10 a.m.**

I worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Rādhāranī had finished Her ablutions and ornamenting Her body when She was called for by Mother Yaśodā early in the morning through Her friends, and there in her house She prepared food and drink. Upon awakening, Kṛṣṇa went first to the cowshed and milked the cows, and then came home and took His bath, eating His meal in the company of His playmates. Rādhā then took Her meal.

#### **3. *Purvāhna-līlā* – Forenoon Pastimes: 8:10 a.m. to 10:34 a.m.**

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<sup>6</sup> I have changed the eight headings of this translation to match the names given by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

I remember Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the forenoon. He was going toward the forest, followed by cows and cowherd friends. Others like Nanda Mahārāja also followed Him. Because He was anxious to be with Rādhārānī, Kṛṣṇa went to search Her out on the banks of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

I also remember Śrī Rādhā, who, having caught a glimpse of Kṛṣṇa, went home where She was ordered by Her mother-in-law (Jatilā) to worship the Sun god. Rādhārānī had sent Her girlfriends to discover Kṛṣṇa's whereabouts, and thus, She cast her eyes down the pathway by which they were likely to return.

#### **4. *Madhyāhna-līlā* – Midday Pastimes: 10:34 a.m. to 3:22 p.m.**

I remember Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa during the midday period. Both were happy in each other's company, exhibiting goosebumps and other such symptoms as Their bodily ornaments. They both felt unsteady because of Their very keen desires for amorous play.

They were engrossed in various sports, such as playing see-saw, roaming in the forest, sporting in the water, hiding Kṛṣṇa's flute, drinking honey wine, love-play, and worshiping the Sun god. Each had a great longing for the other, and both were attended by large retinues of friends.

#### **5. *Aparāhna-līlā* – Afternoon Pastimes: 3:22 p.m. to 5:46 p.m.**

I remember Śrī Rādhā, who arranged many presents for Kṛṣṇa after She arrived at Her home. By that time She had taken Her ablutions and had dressed in beautiful clothes. She was full of joy to see the lotus-like face of Her beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

I also remember Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the afternoon. He was walking toward Vraja, followed by myriad cows and cowherd boyfriends. At home He was received by Nanda Mahārāja and other elderly people, and then He was bathed and groomed by Mother Yaśodā.

#### **6. *Sāyam-līlā* – Early Evening Pastimes: 5:46 p.m. to 8:10 p.m.**

I remember Śrī Rādhā in the evening. She had sent many exquisite preparations for beloved Kṛṣṇa with Her friend, who brought back the remainder of the food tasted by Him. Rādhārānī became very happy to partake of it.

I also remember Vrajendra Kṛṣṇa, who had taken His bath at home and was very well dressed. Mother Yaśodā fondled Him. He came to the cowshed and milked several cows, and after finishing this chore He again returned home and took His meals.

#### **7. *Pradoṣa-līlā* – Pastimes at night fall: 8:10 p.m. to 10:34 p.m.**

I remember Śrī Rādhā early in the evening in the company of Her playmates. She had dressed Herself in clothes suitable for the dark and light fortnight, and pursuing Vṛndā's advice She repaired to a bower of peace and bliss on the banks of the Yamunā, accompanied by a messenger.

I also remember Śrī Kṛṣṇa sitting in an assembly of cow herders and watching various acrobatic feats. Yaśodā, His affectionate mother, then brought Him home and attempted to put Him to sleep. Afterwards, the Lord quietly left His bed for the bower of bliss.

#### 8. *Rātri-lilā* – Nocturnal (night) Pastimes: 10:34 p.m. to 3:22 a.m.

I remember both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, who were anxious for each other's company. When They are together, Vṛndā attends the loving couple in various ways. They both look very charming along with Their loving friends, while They roam in the forests and are engrossed in singing and dancing in the style of *rāsa*. They feel tired after so many sportive activities. They are then looked after by many loving friends. At night They repose on a bed of flowers, and then They sleep.

### **Meditation in your *siddha-deha* – the medium of identity transformation**

Contemplation in one's *siddha-deha* is a very personal and confidential matter. There are clear guidelines given by the *ācāryas* and they have also provided elaborate examples in their books of prayers, where they reveal within their own meditations, their deepest longings for their desired relationship and service. These books serve as direct models of contemplation for those desiring to enter *mādhurya-rasa*, especially as *mañjarīs*. Those desiring *sakhī-bhāva* as *priya-sakhīs* can use the same framework with the appropriate changes in moods, service, and so on. The same principles apply to the other three *rasas*.

This is a gradual process, and in the beginning of this *bhajana*, even at the stage of *niṣṭhā*, it is not possible to fully implement this practice as it will be described here. In the last section of this chapter I will discuss the five progressive stages of remembering within *smaraṇa-daśā*. So consider this section as an overview of what takes place during the final three stages – *dhyāna*, *anusmṛti*, and *samādhi* – as described by the *ācāryas* in their teachings.

As always, your *sādhana* is the starting point, especially hearing and chanting, which are the foundational *aṅgas*, without which, this practice cannot be done successfully. Increasingly intense and deep *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam* are the prime nourishment for this level of *smaraṇam* during these advanced stages of *rāgānuṅgā-bhakti*.

This is essentially a process of full internal immersion. The depth and focus of that immersion is directly proportional to your extraction from entanglement in your external existence, which takes place progressively over an extended period of time. This extraction also requires many adjustments to your lifestyle to facilitate this level of commitment. Obviously, only those who are determined to make this their last life in material existence will be inclined to do this, and

the only motivator powerful enough is spiritual greed (*lobha*) for a relationship with Kṛṣṇa in His *līla*.

The concept of meditating in your *siddha-deha* brings up a number of different items for consideration. I'll review those aspects to make everything as clear as possible. First and foremost is that you will meditate on the various pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa according to the eight daily and evening periods, and while doing so, you see yourself within those pastimes engaging in the activities and performing specific services there – activities and services that you personally desire – along with the other *sakhīs* of Rādhā. In other words, whatever time of day or night it is, knowing the pastimes that are taking place at that time, you will join in and become an active participant.

Envisioning yourself directly participating means fully assuming your *siddha-deha* identity and engaging in these activities in your meditations. It may start off conceptually as “who I want to be”, but it soon evolves into “who I am” – eternally. Our material mind, our self-conception and our body are all illusory and temporary manifestations – dream-like and fleeting. *Siddha-deha* meditation is investing our time and life force in another reality that is supreme and eternal. It is ever existent and we can join in at any time if we know the guidelines and are qualified.

You will also contemplate the various loving moods and types of personal interactions you desire to have with Rādhā and with Kṛṣṇa, which will be based on or modeled after the *vraja-vāsī* whose example you have personally chosen to take shelter of and follow. In *mādhurya-rasa*, it will be one of the eight principal *sakhīs*: Lalitā, Viśākhā, Citrā, Campakalatā, Tuṅgavidyā, Indulekhā, Raṅgadevī and Sudevī. That means focusing on three primary relationships equally as we learned from Viśvanātha Cakravartī in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*.

Just as we have read the detailed descriptions of the various *gopīs* in the *līlā-smaraṇam* books – how they're dressed, their unique personal features and personalities – in the same way, you have to contemplate your desired characteristics and modes of interaction with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and the other *sakhīs* in your group. The template of your *ekadāśa-bhāvas* gives you the framework within which all of these aspects expand, and it defines the basic parameters of appropriate contemplation.

At the risk of being redundant, I want to emphasize that this is absolutely not pretending, imagination or merely a visualization exercise within the mind. It is part of the deeper stages of *smaraṇa-dāśā* – *dhyāna*, *anusmṛti*, and *samādhi*. It is an opportunity to express your innermost desires and longings directly in the context of participating in Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*, exactly as you have read about it in the *līlā-smaraṇam* books.

This part of the process, which is the essence of *rāgānugā-bhajana*, is even more so about intense desire – greed, *lobha*, and longing, *laulyam*. As we have read repeatedly, all of our desires will be fulfilled – our desired eternal form, identity, personality, relationship, service, moods of love, and so on. As we desire to fulfill Kṛṣṇa's desires, He desires to fulfill ours in perfect reciprocation.

All of the meditation examples given by the Gauḍīya *ācāryas* relate to contemplating yourself as a *nitya-sakhī mañjarī*, but the underlying principles apply to all desired *rasas*. The following

verse is found in Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī's *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*, as well as Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's, *Prema-bhakti-candrikā*:

*sakhinām sangini-rūpam ātmānam vasanāmayim  
ajna-sevā-param tat-tad-rūpalankara-bhūṣitam*

One should meditate on oneself in a form that is a female associate of the *sakhīs*, engaged in services on their command, decorated by Her (Rādhā) ornaments. PBC, 58

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Sakhinām* – One should think of himself as a female associate of *sakhīs* such as Śrī Lalitā, Śrī Rūpa-mañjarī and others. In which way? *Ājñā-sevāparam* – Serving Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava with their consent and according to their orders.

And again, in which way? *Tat-tad rūpalankara-bhūṣitam* – Decorated with an exquisite form captivating the mind of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and the left-over ornaments of Śrī Rādhikā; in service, ornamented with the left-over flower garlands. Thus, it is said. And again, in which way? *Vasanāmayim* – Seeing oneself in contemplation in this capacity; and so forth.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains the role of the *guru* at this stage:

When the devotee has greed for practicing *rāgānugā*, he should inquire from his *guru*. The *guru*, after examining the devotee's taste, will determine his particular type of worship and teach him all about his spiritual body.

According to this revelation, the devotee aspiring for *prema* should live near the *guru* in order to obtain all knowledge of the subject, and then, residing in his own place, he should with great effort and eagerness, practice his worship. By continuously remembering the identity equipped with name and form given by the *guru*, he will attain identity with it. This identity is called *svarūpa-siddhi* or *ātmā jñāna*.

The stages of glorifying and remembering Kṛṣṇa's name, form, qualities and pastimes which were mentioned becomes at this time fully manifest. The purpose of all these practices is to enter into the eternal name, form, qualities and pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa by forming a relationship with Them, through meditation on one's own spiritual identity. CS, Chapter 6, Part 5

Now let's look at some very revealing excerpts from Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī's, *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*, which describe in detail, many different aspects of meditation in one's *siddha-deha*, specifically in the mood of a *mañjarī* in Lalitā's group:

In the same way, the *sādhaka* shall perform *mānasi-sevā* to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa during the eight periods of the day. He shall dwell amongst his *guru-gana* and perform *līlā-smaraṇa* according to their instructions.

In his mind, in his *siddha-deha*, he shall visualize himself rendering appropriate services during the various times. In his *siddha-deha*, he (she) shall always live in Yāvaṭa and Vṛṣabhānu-pura, serving in the home of Śrī Rādhā along side her *guru-rūpa-sakhī* and the other *sakhīs*, such as Śrī Lalitā, Viśākhā, and so on.

At Nandīśvara-pura, on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, and in the beautiful Vṛndāvana forest, beginning from the early morning and continuing throughout the day, she shall offer meals and other services (such as fanning with a *camara* and massaging the feet) to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

The *sādhaka* shall contemplate his Vṛndāvana *siddha-deha* in this way: She is a *kiśorī-gopī* (under 15 years old), fully decorated with ornaments, having large raised breasts, and endowed with the sixty-four qualities.

She has a secret love for Śrī Govinda that is bewildering even to Cupid himself. She speaks very sweetly and has a divine form.

By nature she brims with the joy of singing, playing musical instruments and dancing. Day and night her heart is filled with love for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

She has all pleasant characteristics and is adorned with feminine gestures that excite feelings of love. She is born from the mercy of her *guru*, and she always follows her *guru-rūpā-sakhī*. She remains in Śrī Rādhā's own party (*yūtha*) in the company of Lalitā's group (*gana*).

She is very devoted to Śrī Rādhā, is a resident of Yāvaṭa grāma, and a follower of *kāma-rūpa-bhakti* (having an intense desire to serve in transcendental *madhura-rati*).

Her body is made of *cid-ānanda-rasa* and is radiant like molten gold. She wears very beautiful blue clothing and is nicely decorated with various kinds of ornaments.

She always stays alongside Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and she is in the prime of youth. The names of her mother, father and husband are determined in this way: The mother's name is derived from the first syllable of the *sādhaka's* *guru*-given name. The father's name is derived from the third syllable, and the husband's [name] comes from the last [syllable].

Her home is in the village of Yāvaṭa, and she has a very graceful and delicate form. She is decorated with various lovely ornaments, and she assists in the dressing of Śrī Rādhā. GGSP, 78-91

Being intensely engaged in his *sādhana*, the *sādhaka* shall then meditate, in his *siddha-deha*, on Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. They are more charming than millions of Cupids, and are surrounded by Their dearest *sakhīs*, who stand like the filaments of a lotus around Them. The *sādhaka* shall meditate on the captivating Divine Couple by incorporating the above-mentioned descriptions of Their ages, dress, forms, and so on, in his *smaraṇa*.

Concerning that *dhyāna* (meditation), before anything else, the *sādhaka* should perform *smaraṇa* of the *mañjarī* forms of his *guru-praṇālī*, beginning with his *guru*, then *parama-*



*guru*, and so on. Then he shall meditate on Śrī Rādhikā, and after that Śrī Nandānandana. GGSP, 342-344

There is nothing at all vague or ambiguous about these descriptions from Śrī Dhyānacandra. This is the essence of the confidential process of *bhajana*. Those desiring to be among Rādhā's *priya-sakhīs* will simply make the necessary adjustments to these meditation guidelines according to their own desired moods and aspirations for a particular relationship and services. Those desiring other *rasas* like *sakhya*, can follow the same framework and substitute their appropriate moods, services and pastimes.

Many Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* wrote prayers wherein they expressed their deep desires for a relationship with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, along with their aspirations for specific and varied services. These prayers also follow the eight pastime periods and express how these *ācāryas*, in their *siddha-deha mañjarī* identities, desire particular services during each period. In other words, they perfectly follow the same framework given above by Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī in his *paddhati*, each in their own unique and personal way.

In his prayers of longing expressed in *Utkalikā-vallārī*, Rūpa Gosvāmī is speaking as a female. But he is not speaking as Rūpa-mañjarī, who is a *nitya-siddha gopī*, he is speaking in the role of a *sādhaka* meditating in his *siddha-deha* identity. He is teaching us by his example. Just as his external *sādhana* is an example for all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, similarly, Rūpa Gosvāmī has provided us with an confidential look into his internal *rāgānugā-bhajana*.

Rūpa Gosvāmī is teaching us how to pray with intense desire for many different kinds of services and interactive experiences with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, as well as the other *sakhīs*. Similar prayers by the other *ācāryas* serve the same purpose. These books show the individual nature of each *ācārya's* desires, and also the commonalities between them. They show us the extent to which we can express our desires.

We can conclude that Rūpa Gosvāmī is not speaking directly as Rūpa-mañjarī, because Rūpa-mañjarī does not express feelings like these in any of the *līlā* books. That is most definitely not her mood, because she has none of the material conditioning that Rūpa Gosvāmī expresses. You will not read any such expressions by any of the *sakhīs* in the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* books. Here are some excerpts from *Utkalikā-vallārī* that highlight the mood of longing expressed by Śrī Rūpa:

Intent upon attaining my cherished desire, I take shelter of Vṛndāvana-dhāma. All alone and loudly lamenting, I openly display the severe burns branded in my heart by scorching tears of separation. UV, 1

O Śrī Kṛṣṇa! O Śrī Rādhā! Your hearts are flooded by heavy torrents of mercy. Therefore, be pleased with this fallen soul. Bestow upon me just a drop of real love for You, thus guaranteeing me Your audience. UV, 16

Where am I, a wretched and helpless maidservant, compared with the exalted devotees in whom divine love has already sprouted? Knowing that even for them this *prema-sevā* is extremely rare, for a maidservant like me it will be next to impossible to attain. Still an intense and unabating thirst for it leaves me delirious. UV, 26

O Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, how astonishing it is that exalted devotees who are accomplished in all kinds of *sādhana* cannot catch even a momentary glimpse of You in the course of their meditation. I, on the other hand, even while plagued with a dull, evil mind filled with unruly desires, long for You to appear on the pathway of my eyes. Alas! How is it that I am not embarrassed? Have I lost all sense of shame and dignity? UV, 34

Am I at fault in making such a request? O Master and Mistress of Vṛndāvana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rādhā, who would not be driven mad by Your ever-fresh sweetness? By drinking the honey liquor of the sweetness of Your qualities, I have become so intoxicated that I have dared to offer such a prayer. UV, 35

“O my Lord and Lady, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rādhā, the wealth of *prema* that bestows the good fortune of readily attaining Your *sevā* has not yet risen in my heart. Not even in my dreams have I experienced it.” UV, 65

O possessors of my life, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rādhā, You are eternally absorbed in amorous enjoyment! This vine of longings, this *Utkalikā-vallarī*, has sprouted up in front of You here in Vṛndāvana. I tremble as I recite it. After You hear my heartfelt request, be gracious to this lowly person – answer my prayers and give me the service for which I have been so deeply yearning. UV, 70

Here are similar examples from Viśvanātha Cakravartī’s *San̄kalpa-kalpadrumaḥ*, where he implores his *guru-praṇālī* by addressing their *siddha* identities:

O Tulasī, O river of profuse mercy, you have compassionately placed your lotus feet upon my head. I have drunk a small portion of the water that touched your feet, and for this reason, all these desires have arisen within my heart. SK, 89

Where am I, whose heart is filled with deceit and hundreds of other faults, and where is this sudden resolve concerning this rare subject matter? O Tulasī, you are the personification of shelter for the helpless. You are my only refuge. Your unconditional mercy accepted me without counting my faults. SK, 90

O Raṅga Mañjarī, please bestow your mercy upon me. O Prema Mañjarī, please grace me with your compassionate glance. O Vilāsa Mañjarī, attracting me to your lotus feet and making me your servant, please accept me with the other *sakhīs*. SK, 91

Friends (O tendencies of my heart, O *sādhaka jīvas*), if your only goal is to relish the *rasa* of the ocean of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s loving pastimes, and if you are longing to attain this, then give up all other desires and worship Śrī Vṛndāvana, the bestower of *prema*. And, if the desire to quickly attain this relish is strong, take shelter of this *San̄kalpa-kalpadrumaḥ* – desire-tree of my auspicious resolve – with firm faith and fixed determination. SK, 104

The desires expressed by these *ācāryas* are all within the framework of the eight daily pastime periods, and they are all in accordance with the kinds of activities that take place therein, exactly as revealed in the *līlā* books of these *ācāryas*. Following within the boundaries of this well-defined model insures that no undesirable deviations will manifest in your *bhajana*.

These prayers are the *ācāryas'* *bhajana mānasi-sevā* meditations, specifically their *aṣṭa-kālīya-līla-smaraṇa* while immersed in their *siddha-deha* identities. They teach us how this type of meditation is done. Neither Rūpa Gosvāmī nor Viśvanātha Cakravartī is speaking in the mood of their perfected states as *mañjarīs*. They are showing us examples of devotees in the stages of *ruci* and *āsakti*, aspiring for *bhāva*.

I'll finish this section with valuable advice from *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, that provides further insight into the process of meditating in your *siddha-deha* identity:

Ascertaining obstacles to this *bhajana*.

Once one has become committed to the eleven aspects of his spiritual identity, he should meditate on them with a determined heart. In the process of remembering, there is one beautiful consideration:

He should meditate constantly on that which is befitting to him. If he meditates on things that are unsuitable, he will never attain perfection, despite practicing for ages and ages. HC, 15.79-81

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's notes:

The aspirant has to engage in one's devotional practice in a way that his spiritual identity, upon which he meditates in the stage of remembering, can be factually assimilated in the stage of attainment. No efforts on the paths of works, philosophical speculation, yoga, or anything else can help one attain this ineffable perfection of worship.

The successful devotee appears externally to be engaged in chanting the Holy Name while leading a renounced and simple life, but internally he is constantly experiencing the splendors of the greatest *rasa*.

On the other hand, the practitioners who are externally engaged in elaborate displays of devotional activity but do not take care to stabilize their minds will never be able to take their meditation to the next level of *āpana-daśā*, or "the stage of appropriation."

Thus, they may practice for many lifetimes without success. The *bhajana* described here is a natural process, but if it becomes contaminated by false identities, it is diverted and becomes a means to something other than *Vṛndāvana*.

One should approach a pure devotee spiritual master and learn from him what is pure *bhajana* and what are the false accretions to such service. Such discernment will equip one to perform *bhajana* properly.

Let us all be ever grateful for the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, which was distributed through His generous *ācāryas*, who speak with incredible clarity from the heart, revealing confidential but essential truths for our eternal benefit.

## When does the process of identity transformation begin?

The internal processes and practices (*bhajana*) involved in the realization and manifestation of your eternal identity are the life and soul of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. It is very important to understand that, although they are well defined, none of these practices are mechanical or rigid in their application. This natural spontaneous process is all about Kṛṣṇa's mercy upon aspiring devotees, helping to extract them from their material identities and become gradually absorbed in their eternal spiritual identity, relationship and service.

As we have heard repeatedly from the *ācāryas*, the primary qualification for engaging in *rāgānugā-bhakti* is the awakening of spiritual greed – *lobha*. This greed manifests as a spontaneous and natural attraction towards a specific *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa – *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* or *mādhurya*. Therefore, the awakening of an intense longing for a specific relationship with Kṛṣṇa is the first criterion regarding when one should begin inquiring into these processes.

It's quite possible that one may develop the seed of a spontaneous attraction for a particular *rasa* before the appearance of greed, and that attraction should be fostered by hearing about the pastimes associated with one's desired *rasa*. The more one reads and contemplates those pastimes, while nurturing the desire to participate in them in the specific mood of a selected Vraja associate, the sooner one will likely be blessed by the appearance of greed.

Jīva Gosvāmī explains this in *Bhakti-sandarbhā*:

When a person develops a taste for the aforesaid specific *rāga* (i.e., any of the four main *rasas*), even though that *rāga* itself has not arisen in her or him, the heart becomes like a crystal, shining as it reflects the rays of the moon of that *rāga*.

By hearing about this *rāga* from scripture or from one's teacher, one develops a taste for the actions of the *rāgatmika* associates also, that are expressions of this *rāgatmika-bhakti*. Then, by adhering to the *rāga* of a particular associate of the Lord, according to one's taste, one executes devotion, which is called *rāgānugā*. BS, *Anuccheda* 310

After the appearance of greed for a chosen *rasa*, the next step is hearing about the specific internal processes, especially conceiving of and meditating on *kṛṣṇa-līlā* in your *siddha-deha*. This is the stage of hearing – *śravaṇa-dasā*, the first stage in identity transformation. One must learn the principles and guidelines from the previous *ācāryas* and qualified *rāgānugā śikṣā-gurus* – *rasika* Vaiṣṇavas. I will examine these five stages of progressive realization in full detail in the last section.

These internal devotional processes require consistent steadiness (*niṣṭhā*) in one's *sādhana* and *bhajana*, along with a mature level of sense control, detachment (*anartha-nivṛtti*), and mental focus. Those who are not qualified as such will undoubtedly encounter frustration in their endeavors and will not attain success. Moreover, if spiritual greed has not arisen in the heart, it is highly unlikely that one will be sufficiently motivated to pursue these practices with any seriousness or consistency.

In *Bhajana-rahasya*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura summarizes the process and qualifications according to his analysis of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's eight *śikṣāstaka* verses, each of which he has associated with the successive stages of progress in *bhakti*:

As one executes devotional practices according to the instructions of the *śikṣāstaka*, the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa gradually manifest within his heart. In the beginning, one should perform *bhajana* according to the first *śloka* of *śikṣāstaka* for some days. By this practice one should then become mature as described in the second verse.

Gradually one should concentrate on *bhajana* according to the third and fourth *ślokas*. According to the fifth *śloka* one should accept one's spiritual body (*siddha-deha*). After accepting one's *siddha-deha* one should begin *bhajana* under the shelter of the lotus feet of Śrīmatī Rādhārānī and gradually make progress.

*Bhajana* performed according to the sixth *śloka* indicates almost all *anarthas* have disappeared and one, therefore, has the required *adhikāra* (qualification) for attaining *siddha-deha*. If one thinks of his *siddha-deha* without achieving the *adhikāra* his intellect gets bewildered.

One should carefully accept the sequence as given in the *śikṣāstaka* if he wants to attain perfection. By observing the activities of *sādhus* one can attain a pure intellect. On achieving one's *siddha-deha*, as one continues *bhajana* he can easily enjoy service throughout the day and night (*aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇam*).

One should remember *śikṣāstaka* and practice *smaraṇa* and *kīrtana* accordingly, then gradually *aṣṭa-kāla* service will be awakened in the heart. At that time all unwanted contaminations, including religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation will appear insignificant, and one will achieve the treasure of love. BR, 1.10

Another eye opening revelation and further confirmation from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura: by contemplating one's desired perfect spiritual body – *siddha-deha* – in *mānasi-sevā*, “almost all *anarthas* have disappeared and one therefore has the required *adhikāra* (qualification) for attaining *siddha-deha*.” One's *anarthas* are not yet completely eradicated, yet one becomes qualified to “attain” one's *siddha-deha*.

So clearly, one may begin meditation on one's *siddha-deha* “before” all *anarthas* and material desires have been completely removed, keeping well in mind that, “If one thinks of his *siddha-deha* without achieving the *adhikāra* his intellect gets bewildered.” Therefore, the qualifications are *not* complete freedom from *anarthas* and material desires. This *siddha-deha* meditation process, along with other selected *aṅgas* of *rāgānugā-sādhana*, will gradually cleanse the remaining *anarthas*, leading to the qualifications needed to eventually “attain” one's *siddha-deha* at the stage of *bhāva*, which is *svarūpa-siddhi*. It is very important to understand these things with absolute clarity.

If one has acquired greed before attaining *niṣṭhā*, one may certainly contemplate this process, but serious and rapid advancement will not manifest until *niṣṭhā* has become firmly established. Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains the gradual process in *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*:

Now it will be described how the *rāgānugā-bhakta* gradually advances through the stages of *anartha-nivṛtti*, *niṣṭhā*, *ruci* and *āsakti* up to the stage of *prema* and the direct attainment of the beloved Deity.

In the *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* it is said that, “Those who are especially attracted to the mood of the *vraja-vāsīs* and thus perform *rāgānugā-bhakti*, will attain that abundance of eagerness that is needed for performing *rāgānugā-bhajana* and will take birth in Vraja in groups of one, two or three at the same time.”

Here the word *anurāgaugha* means “that eagerness that makes one qualified for doing *rāgānugā-bhajana*”. The *anurāga* mentioned here does not refer to the *sthāyī-bhāva* of that name, because the *sthāyī-bhāva* named *anurāga* cannot be attained within a material body. RVC, 2.7

Because *bhāva* is the stage of realization of one’s *siddha-svarūpa*, i.e., Kṛṣṇa awards one’s desired *siddha-deha*, it is therefore concluded that the transference of one’s identity from the false ego to the eternal ego, begins effectively at the stage of *niṣṭhā*, and progresses throughout *ruci* and *āsakti* up to *bhāva* and into *prema*.

Meditating on your *siddha-deha* is clearly not something that is done only “after” you reach *bhāva*. That makes absolutely no sense whatsoever, because at *bhāva* you will fully realize your eternal identity – *svārūpa-siddhi* – so there is no need to conceive of one mentally. And you cannot attain *bhāva* unless you have been meditating on your desired service via your *siddha-deha*. The *siddha-deha* is absolutely required in order to make a proper connection with a Vraja associate, who will become your mentor and means of entry into the eternal pastimes.

You cannot perform *mānasi-sevā* (service within the mind) in Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes while maintaining the conception of yourself as your external material identity. No *brahmacaris*, *sannyāsīs* or other males are allowed within Vraja meditations, especially in *mādhurya-rasa* with the *gopīs*. For *mādhurya*, you need a suitable female identity and body to meditate on your participation in the *līlā*. That is precisely the sole purpose of the *siddha-deha*.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda explains this further in *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*:

One should not think that it is impossible that a person performing *sādhana* with a male body can be a *gopī* in his meditation. All souls are the marginal energy of Kṛṣṇa. Male and female of the gross body are illusory conceptions, which originate in the subtle body.

The eternal pure body of the soul is spiritual, without a distinction of male or female. This spiritual body has free will, and is impelled by pure desire. When a particular spiritual sentiment arises in relation to Kṛṣṇa, it produces a male or female body for the soul. In *śānta-rasa*, the body is neuter. In *madhura-rasa* all the souls have pure female forms, who worship one male, Kṛṣṇa. CS, Chapter 5, Part 6

Not one *ācārya* whose books are being analyzed has said that meditation on one’s *siddha-deha* first requires complete freedom from material desires and *anarthas* – quite the contrary – as we learned repeatedly from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Viśvanātha Cakravartī.

It was stated in Chapter 4 in the section on *anartha-nivṛtti*, that *bhakti* is a positive accepting process, not a negative rejecting process. Thus, the transformation from your temporary material identity to your eternal spiritual identity is one of gradually embracing your new spiritual identity as it is crystalizing in the *siddha-deha* within the framework of its *ekadāśa-bhāvas*.

The more you embrace the eternal transcendental reality within and identify yourself within it, via the *siddha-deha*, the more you will be extracted from your material identity, and it will correspondingly wind down gradually over time. I will examine the gradual step by step transition in greater detail in the next section.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī eloquently summarizes the entire sequence of progressive development on this path, by showing how at each stage, the transformation and manifestation of your spiritual identity gradually increases, while simultaneously, the material conditioning and false identity decreases correspondingly:

*Ahankara* (false ego) is of two types:

- (1) consciousness of I – *ahanta*
- (2) consciousness of mine – *mamatā*

By *jñāna* these two are destroyed and liberation is attained. By directing these two towards the body (I am this body), a house (this is my house), and so on, bondage results.

I am a follower of the Lord. I am the servant of the Lord. The Lord with His associates, an ocean of sweetness with His form, qualities and pastimes, is to be served by me. If one thinks in this way, identifying oneself as the Lord's servant and making the Lord along with His associates the object of one's possession, it is called *prema*. *Prema* is in this way distinct from both bondage and liberation, and is properly called the crown jewel of all human goals.

There is a sequence in this...

When the materialistic aspect of *ahanta* and *mamatā* is extremely deep, one remains fixed in the cycle of birth and death.

When by good fortune, a particle of faith is born (*śraddhā*) and one thinks of becoming a Vaiṣṇava and serving the Lord, the materialistic aspect becomes slightly spiritualized (*gandha*) and the *jīva* becomes qualified for devotional service (*bhakti*).

At the stage of *sādhū saṅga*, the spiritualization becomes more condensed and his material attachments are *ātyantikī* (thorough).

At the stage of unsteady *bhajana-kriyā* (*sādhana-bhakti*), the spiritualization of I and mine is specific, localized in one place, whereas the material aspect is still in full force (*pūrṇa*).

At the stage of *niṣṭhā*, spiritualization becomes detectable in many places, and the materialistic influence is still prominent (*prāyikī*).

At the stage of *ruci*, spiritualization of I and mine becomes dominant, nearing completion (*prāyikī*) and the materialistic concept of I and mine becomes localized in certain issues.

At the stage of *āsakti*, the spiritual aspect of I and mine becomes complete (*pūrna*) and the material aspect becomes a trace (*gandha*).

At the stage of *bhāva*, the spiritual aspect becomes thorough (*ātyantikī*) and the material aspect becomes like an empty shadow.

At the stage of *prema*, the spiritual aspect becomes extremely intense (*param-ātyantikī*) and the material aspect is completely absent. MK, 8.12

### The five phases in the evolution of your eternal identity

So far, in this chapter, we have learned about determining your *rasa* and following a chosen Vraja associate. I analyzed the issue of *mañjarī-bhāva* and established the correct understanding according to the *ācāryas*. We learned about Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's description of the three progressive *siddha* bodies. I established the origins and validity of *siddha-praṇālī*, the *siddha-deha*, and its *ekadāśa-bhāvas*, as well as examining these subjects in full detail as presented by our *ācāryas*. We reviewed *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*, and explored meditation in your *siddha-deha* on *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*. Then, the process of when identity transformation begins was discussed. Now we'll finally see how all of these pieces of the puzzle come together in *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains in *Jaiva-dharma* and *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* that there are five phases through which one evolves to attain the complete realization and manifestation of one's eternal spiritual identity in Vraja. These five phases will be examined in full detail herein. We'll also learn how and when the three *siddha* bodies manifest within these five developmental stages. A detailed diagram is provided near the end of this section to help visualize how all of this information fits together.

In *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gives a slightly different explanation of these five stages than he does in *Jaiva-dharma* and *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*. It's interesting to note that it is the same explanation later given by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, as quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his Purport to Verse 8 in Nectar of Instruction.

As I mentioned earlier, *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta* was written in 1886, ten years before *Jaiva-dharma* (1896) and later *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* (1900). Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was 62 in 1900, and had retired to a *bhajan kuṭīra* near Haridāsa Ṭhākura's *bhajan kuṭīra*, in Jagannātha Purī, in concentrated *rāgānugā-bhajana*. Bhaktivinoda took *bābājī veśa* in 1908. This gives us a valuable contextual perspective.

*Jaiva-dharma* and *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* are both in complete sync on these particular details, and those two books go into much greater depth to explain every facet of this essential knowledge. They are also both in sync with Dhyānacandra's *smaraṇa-paddhati*, which we learned is the



source for *ekadāśa-bhāva* and which is directly referenced in *Jaiva-dharma*. These books are the primary sources for the information presented in this section.

Haridāsa Ṭhākura explains these five stages to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*:

Five stages in the cultivation of the *gopī* identity.

The complete realization of these eleven aspects of identity (*ekadāśa-bhāva*) develops through five stages experienced in the life of the practitioner. These five stages are the following: hearing, acceptance, remembering, attainment, full possession.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Notes:

As one progresses in the cultivation of one's spiritual identity, five stages are progressively crossed. These are:

- (1) the stage of hearing – *śravaṇa-daśā*
- (2) the stage of accepting – *varaṇa-daśā*
- (3) the stage of remembering – *smaraṇa-daśā*
- (4) the stage of adoption – *āpana-daśā*
- (5) the stage of full possession – *sampatti-daśā*

One who has a strong desire to taste the nectar of the *gopīs'* loving mood, abandons all consideration of the religious principles of the Vedas. He cares not for public opinion, but simply worships Kṛṣṇa. Whoever worships Kṛṣṇa in any one of the moods of the residents of Vraja will attain a suitable spiritual body to serve Him there. CC, 2.8.219, 221

With these words, Rāmānanda Rāya taught that any practitioner who wishes to cultivate the *ujjala-rasa* absolutely must take a *gopī* body. When one hears these pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and becomes attracted to this particular mood, one must approach a genuine spiritual master to learn these eleven aspects of his spiritual identity.

Hearing the spiritual master delineate this identity in theory is called *śravaṇa-daśā*, the stage of hearing.

When the disciple eagerly accepts this identification, that is called *varaṇa-daśā*, the stage of accepting.

When he cultivates this mood and identity by meditating on *rasa* in all its aspects, then he is situated in *smaraṇa-daśā*, the stage of remembering.

When he has fully assimilated that identity, which has now been made fully clear, he has reached the state called *āpana-daśā* or *prāpti-daśā*, the stage of attainment.

Finally, when he becomes entirely separated from this earthly existence and becomes eternally fixed in his longed-for spiritual form, he has attained *sampatti-daśā*, the stage of full possession. HC, 15.59-60

These are the five transitional stages of identity transformation, of realizing and manifesting your eternal identity as it unfolds through the practice of *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajan*. It is critically important to understand these stages with complete clarity, so I'll discuss each stage in greater detail.

**(1) Hearing the spiritual master delineate this identity in theory is called *śravaṇa-daśā*, the stage of hearing.**

As I stated in Chapter 1, this book contains the essential core knowledge that would be discussed by a *guru* and disciple as part of *śravaṇa-daśā*. I have compiled all of these relevant details directly from the books of the Gauḍīya *ācāryas*. The only remaining elements are each individual devotee's personal and confidential contributions. All branches of the Caitanya Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava movement have their particular preferences and nuances, but the essence is basically the same.

Having a confidential personal relationship with one's *guru* is very beneficial when navigating through these esoteric waters. That is precisely why it is always recommended that one should seek the association of more advanced Vaiṣṇavas, *śikṣā-gurus*, especially and specifically those who are compassionate, generous and *compatible*, as common sense would also dictate. This is not an academic transfer of knowledge between teacher and student. It is very personal, private, and not the subject of general public discussions. Bear in mind Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's recommendation about keeping your *bhajana* private, lest others criticize and commit *aparādha*.

There are a lot of aspects to cover when discussing a completely new eternal identity along with a range of loving moods, activities and services in a transcendental realm with which we have no prior experience. Of course, devotees at this stage will already have had insights and realizations regarding their desired participation in *vraja-līlā*, so it's a matter of working out the details together with one's *gurus*, and/or within the heart guided by Kṛṣṇa, as we learned in the section on *ekadāśa-bhāva*.

Because this subject is confidential and very esoteric, it's not surprising that many Vaiṣṇavas are unaware of this knowledge and the processes involved. These details are generally kept sheltered from those who are unqualified. Access to this confidential realm of knowledge is granted only by Kṛṣṇa or His merciful *rasika* devotees, as are the realizations necessary for progress.

Although *rāgānugā-bhakti* does not adhere strictly to scriptural rules and regulations, there are still many principles and guidelines to learn to successfully navigate this path. These details must be learned from one's *guru*, the *ācāryas'* teachings and qualified *rasika* Vaiṣṇavas.

In *Jaiva-dharma*, Vijaya inquires from his *rasika śikṣā-guru*:

Vijaya: When is one's *śravaṇa-daśā* considered completed?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: One's *śravaṇa-daśā* is completed when one realizes the eternality of *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Because *kṛṣṇa-līlā* is supremely pure and transcendental, it completely captivates the mind and heart. One is then afflicted with acute impatience to enter into it and participate in it. Śrī Gurudeva describes to the *śiṣya* the *ekadāśa-bhāvas* that I mentioned previously.

*Śravaṇa-daśā* should only be considered completed or perfected when the disciple's disposition of mind is imbued with the loveliness of the *līlā*. At that time, the disciple is afflicted with intense eagerness and attains *varaṇa-daśā* (the stage of acceptance). JD, Chapter 40, Pages 855-856

**(2) When the disciple eagerly accepts this identification, that is called *varaṇa-daśā*, the stage of accepting.**

Once all of the details related to the *ekadāśa-bhāvas* of your *siddha-deha* are in place, you have the ingredients necessary for the next stage – acceptance. What exactly does that mean? It means that, after you have begun conceptualizing your new spiritual persona, at some point you have to fully accept it as real and enter into that reality on a regular basis during *bhajana*.

A few highlights from *Jaiva-dharma*:

Vijaya: Prabhu, please tell me about *varaṇa-daśā*.

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: When the spontaneous attachment of the heart is bound in the *līlā* by the shackles of the *ekadāśa-bhāvas* that I mentioned previously, the disciple becomes overwhelmed and falls at Gurudeva's lotus feet weeping constantly.

...In this stage, the *guru-rūpā sakhī* gives the *sādhaka* the order (*ājñā*) to engage in *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇam* by taking complete shelter of *kṛṣṇa-nāma* while residing in Vraja, and assures him that his heartfelt, cherished longing will be fulfilled very soon. JD, Chapter 40, Pages 856-857

This is an incredibly significant existential milestone for aspiring devotees. It is the beginning of the dynamic transference of their identity from the material sphere to the spiritual sphere. From this point on, regular time will be spent specifically cultivating a new identity, with a new collection of desires and emotional loving moods, new activities with new personalities, all taking place within the mind and heart during meditative *bhajana*. The more you cultivate your new identity, the sooner it becomes reality.

Haridāsa Ṭhākura explains this to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*:

Advancing to the stage of acceptance.

As the aspiring devotee hears about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, he starts to feel an intense desire to join them in their activities. Possessed by this desire, he asks the spiritual master: "O great soul, what must I do to attain these pastimes?"

The spiritual master then mercifully describes to his disciple the eleven aspects and how they relate to the Lord's *līlā*. Pleased with his disciple, the spiritual master then orders him, "Now go and enter the Lord's pastimes in this identity." On hearing of his eternal spiritual identity with a pure attitude, the aspirant accepts it and takes it into his heart. HC, 15.64-68

One should reveal one's *siddha-bhāva* to the *gurudeva*.

After the *guru* and disciple have thus discussed the matter, and the disciple's spiritual identity is finally settled, he should fall down at his spiritual master's feet and entreat him, begging him for success in attaining this spiritual mood. Then the spiritual master will mercifully give his order and the disciple enters into that spiritual identity. HNC, 15.74-76

One important point should be made very clear – accepting this new identity is not pretending or imagining. There is nothing material or mundane about it. Far from it. One who thinks in this way is missing the whole point and is factually being very offensive to the *ācāryas*. When Śrīla Prabhupāda criticized people for "imagining or pretending to be *gopīs*," he was talking about men who dress up like *gopīs* and imitate them externally. That is absolutely not what Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is talking about here. No such external exhibitions are ever recommended or tolerated. Externally, one is always and only engaged in the *sādhana* of hearing, chanting, worshipping, praying and so on.

This is esoteric spiritual science at its zenith. It is the subtle scientific process for extracting an entangled *jīva*'s spiritual personal existence from being bound by a false temporary material identity, trapped by *karma* within gross and subtle bodies, and infusing that personal life force into a new eternal spiritually perfect identity and form. Although it is scientific, it is not a mechanical process. It is Kṛṣṇa personally guiding us step by step directly to His realm, our new eternal home.

The transfer of identity begins precisely at the point of conscious acceptance and evolves dynamically thereafter. The devotee has first conceived his or her new identity and then consciously and fully accepts it as his or her eternal spiritual persona, and then enters into it internally in the context of Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* until it becomes the devotee's complete identity at the stage of *bhāva – āpana-daśā*.

Our *siddha-deha* is real – it is the sublime spiritual seed of our eternal spiritual identity, which will manifest directly from it. But we have to infuse it with our deepest spiritual desires, exactly

like our materially conditioned mind (our subtle body) sustains the existence of the physical body by keeping it infused with desires for sense pleasure.

Instead of investing only in our material identity and its body, we begin to withdraw and transfer our personal life force and invest it in our new spiritual identity and body, the *siddha-deha*. Our *siddha-deha* then becomes the repository for all of our spiritual aspirations. It is not just “who I desire to be” in Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā* – it is now “who I am.” The only way to meditate on serving in Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā* is through our *siddha-deha*. We cannot meditate on ourselves participating in the *līlā* as our current material identity and body.

The more we spend time internally seeing ourselves involved (*mānasi-sevā*) in the Vraja pastimes in very specific detail, the more progress we make. But we can’t and won’t do that unless we definitively and completely accept our identity as it has been defined by the *ekadāśa-bhāvas*.

The mindset will vary from person to person, but in simple terms the thought process is: “This is who I am, this is what I look like and this is how I want to participate in *vraja-līlā*, with these particular associates of Rādhā, with these specific services and activities in relation to Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa and my *sakhī* mentor.” This properly follows the *ācāryas*’ examples in their prayers that express their profuse desires for service during the eight pastime periods.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura describes his *ekadāśa-bhāvas* in the *Siddhi-lālasa* section of *Gītā-mālā*, one of his songbooks:

My bodily complexion is like lightning and the color of my dress is like a cluster of stars. My name is Kamalā Mañjarī, I am eternally 12 1/2 years old, and my residence is called Svānanda Sukhada kuñja. My *sevā* is to bring camphor and I am in Lalitā’s group. Our party leader is Śrī Rādhā, and the Lord of my Goddess is Śrī Nandānandana. They are the treasure of my life. GM, SL, 1-2

If we don’t fully accept and commit to our new identity and nourish it continually, then it will not manifest. It’s as simple as that. This is not a casual process, nor do we have an alternative. If we do not literally invest in our own spiritual identity, it will not appear because there is no basis for it. Our identity and form will be awarded to us by Kṛṣṇa at the stage of *bhāva*, based solely on what we have been longing for during our *sādhana* and *bhajana*.

What we desire is purely and solely *our* choice – not Kṛṣṇa’s or our *guru*’s order. That’s how it works in *rāgānugā-bhakti*. *Rāgānugā-bhakti* is driven by the spiritual desires of the aspiring devotee and Kṛṣṇa is compelled by that love to fulfill His dear devotee’s desires for a specific identity, form and relationship upon attaining *bhāva*. That is His solemn promise.

*Rāgānugā* devotees don’t ask Kṛṣṇa, “Please tell me what You want me to do.” Instead, they pray, “Please let me serve You in this way and that way and on and on and on.” In other words, they are filled with endless and very specific desires related to pleasing, serving and interacting with Kṛṣṇa and His associates. Their hearts are overflowing with the limitless possibilities and those possibilities bring their spiritual identity to fruition by the force of their acceptance and intense desires.

Once again from Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's *Prema-bhakti-candrikā*:

I will always think of the devotional service of the lotus feet of the Divine Pair, and I will always remain attached to that. Whatever I think of during my spiritual practice (*sādhana*) I will attain in my *siddha-deha* when I reach perfection. This is the means of *rāga-bhakti*. PBC, 55

The treasure I desire as a practitioner I will get when I attain my spiritual body (*siddha-deha*); it is just a question of being ripe or unripe. The ripe stage is the stage of pure devotion (*prema-bhakti*), and the unripe stage is the stage of practice (*sādhana-bhakti*). That is the essential truth about devotional principles. PBC, 56

**(3) When he cultivates this mood and identity by meditating on rasa, in all its aspects, then he is situated in *smaraṇa-daśā*, the stage of remembering.**

The stage of remembering, *smaraṇa-daśā*, also has five progressive phases within it: *smaraṇa*, *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna*, *anusmṛti*, and *samādhi*.

We now find ourselves progressing through the last five stages of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, during which our new spiritual identity is manifesting gradually through five phases of evolutionary development, within which there are another five progressive stages of deepening meditation. *Smaraṇa-daśā* is the incubation stage which facilitates the crystallization and development of our new identity to the point of full realization and manifestation at the stage of *bhāva*.

Don't be confused. It will all make perfect sense. The five stages of identity transformation, as well as the five stages of remembering, correspond more or less to the five final stages of progress in *bhakti* that we have been discussing in this book. We are simply seeing the multiple layers that make up this composite picture of dynamic practice and progress.

I have included a diagram near the end of this section to help readers visualize the interconnection of these three parallel transformative stages. Although the diagram shows specific demarcations for the five stages of *smaraṇa-daśā*, it is really an organic flow of evolutionary development without specific beginning and ending points, because each successive stage is the maturation of the previous one. The diagram will make everything clear and easy to comprehend.

Jīva Gosvāmī describes these five stages of remembering in *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, but first, just to make it even more complex and interesting, he describes four progressive steps specific to contemplating Kṛṣṇa:

Just as we have discussed that hearing and singing generally proceed in a certain order – from the Lord's names, to His forms, attributes and finally His pastimes – remembrance of the Lord should also be taken up in order, which facilitates each successive stage in the progression. Thus, after remembrance of the Lord's name and form, one should remember His attributes, associates, service and pastimes.

There are five stages in the evolution of remembrance:

- 1) To think of the Lord in whatever manner and to whatever extent is known as *smaraṇam*, or remembrance.
- 2) To withdraw the mind from all external objects and fix it in a general way on the Lord is called *dhāraṇa*, or concentration.
- 3) To specifically contemplate the Lord's name, form and other attributes is called *dhyāna*, or meditation.
- 4) When remembrance proceeds without interruption like a continuous flow of nectar, it is called *dhruvānusmṛti*, or constant remembrance.
- 5) When the object of one's meditation alone is manifest, without awareness even of one's own (physical) self, it is called *samādhi*, or trance. BS, *Anuccheda* 278

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gives his explanation of these five stages specifically in conjunction with meditating on one's *siddha-deha*, in his notes on 15.93 in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*:

Simple remembering is the stage where one recalls his spiritual identity and its eleven aspects in relationship to one's service in the circadian pastimes (*aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā*) of the Divine Couple. At this point, there is still no constancy in one's meditation, as one sometimes remembers, and at other times is distracted.

As one progresses, one comes to the stage of self-reminding, *dhāraṇa*, in which one attempts to gain steadiness in remembering.

When one concentrates on all aspects of the object of meditation, that is called *dhyāna* or meditation.

When one meditates at every moment, the state is called "constant recollection" or *anusmṛti*.

When one's meditation is perfect and uninterrupted, and one thinks only of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and nothing else, that state is called *samādhi*. HC, 15.93

The important thing to understand about this particular phase is that our remembrance will gradually become more competent and focused as we progress through these final stages, all as a natural consequence of the intensification of our *sādhana* and *bhajana*. In other words, these phases correspond directly to our growing intense desires and focus on Kṛṣṇa in our meditations in our *siddha-deha*.

In *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī describes the evolving nature of *smaraṇam*, in conjunction with the progressive stages of *bhakti*:

At the stage of *bhajana-kriyā*, meditation on the Lord is momentary, with a tinge of material topics.

At the stage of *niṣṭhā* meditation, there is a trace of other topics.

At the stage of *ruci*, other topics are absent and the meditation is long lasting.

At the stage of *āsakti*, meditation becomes very deep.

During *bhāva*, meditation is marked with the Lord.

At the stage of *prema*, in contrast to simply seeing the Lord, there is direct association with the Lord. MK, 8.12

This remembering stage is where we literally inhabit our *siddha-deha* during regular meditations and engage in service within the mind (*mānasi-sevā*). This is our new life unfolding within, all according to *our* desires to serve and please Kṛṣṇa. We have to show Kṛṣṇa how much we want to be with Him, by literally being with Him in our *bhajana* meditations as much as possible on a regular basis. And why wouldn't we want to be with Kṛṣṇa and all the other Vraja associates?

Devotees who have advanced to the stage of *ruci* and who are experiencing a profound taste from their *sādhana* and *bhajana*, will have little problem being motivated to immerse themselves in these processes. Devotees at the advanced stage of *āsakti*, are almost completely withdrawn from their material lives and they spend most of their time in their spiritual identities internally, rendering service in the eternal *līlā*.

Here are excerpts from the discussion of *smaraṇa-daśā* in *Jaiva-dharma*:

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, [the verse just quoted] means that the *sādhaka* should reside physically in *vraja-maṇḍala*, in other words, in the pastime places of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. If he cannot stay in Vraja physically, then he should do so mentally, because the result of residing in Vraja mentally is the same as residing there physically.

The *sādhaka* should follow in the footsteps of the particular *sakhī* whose loving *bhāvas* have attracted him. He should reside in Vraja with the *abhimāna* (self-conception) of being a *kuñja-sevikā* (a *sakhī* attendant in the *kuñja*) of that particular *sakhī*. He should constantly remember Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *bhāva* of that *sakhī*.

With this gross body the *sādhaka* should perform the *aṅgas* of *vaidhī-bhakti* such as *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*. With his subtle body he should constantly remember the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, and render his assigned *sevā* as a *siddha-vraja-gopī* according to the eleven *bhāvas* that he has attained.

Outwardly, the *sādhaka* must maintain his life following the prescribed rules and regulations, and internally he should cultivate the *bhāvas* that nourish his spiritual form (*siddha-deha*). One who follows this procedure correctly will naturally develop detachment from anything other than Vraja. JD, Chapter 40, Pages 857-858

Vijaya, you are eligible to hear this subject, so I have no hesitation in speaking with you. One attains the stage of [*āpana-daśā*] in his *smaraṇa-daśā*, as a result of performing the appropriate *sādhana* for a long time. During the stage of *smaraṇa*, when one becomes completely free from all the polluted moods of his mundane experience, the stage of *āpana* (realization of one's *svarūpa*) appears.



*Śuddha-bhakti* mercifully appears in the *sādhaka*'s heart according to the degree of appropriate practice in *smaraṇa-daśā*. *Bhakti* alone is attractive to Kṛṣṇa, so by Kṛṣṇa's grace, all the dirt in the form of misconceptions is gradually removed in *smaraṇa-daśā*. JD, Chapter 40, Pages 862

**(4) When he has fully assimilated that identity, which has now been made fully clear, he has reached the state called *āpana-daśā* or *prāpti-daśā*, the stage of attainment.**

This is the next paragraph of the excerpt from *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* quoted above:

By meditating in *samādhi* in this way one attains *āpana-daśā*. People who are not expert may require many lifetimes to pass through these five stages of remembering, but one who is adept may be able to pass through them quickly and attain *āpana-daśā*. HC, 15.93

There are a number of important implications to be drawn from this statement. First, we have learned in the section, **The three *siddha* bodies**, that you attain your *siddha-svarūpa* (your perfected form and identity) at the stage of *bhāva*, which means that *āpana-daśā* is the same as the stage of *bhāva*. Because *bhāva* is preceded by *āsakti*, therefore, we can logically conclude that *samādhi* corresponds, in part, to the deepest stages of *āsakti*, because that is the meditation stage that leads to *āpana-daśā* – *bhāva*.

Another more sobering point is that it may take many lifetimes to pass through these stages, which means that even after reaching such an advanced stage of progress, such as *niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, or even *āsakti*, one is not automatically guaranteed success in that particular lifetime.

The stage of *āpana-daśā* is also significant for all the reasons that the stage of *bhāva* is significant, because they occur simultaneously. At this stage, you have finally attained your *siddha-deha*, the internally conceived, spiritually perfect body and identity that was contemplated all that time in the course of *rāgānugā-bhajana* in *mānasi-sevā* during *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇam*.

This is your *siddha-svarūpa*, the perfection (*siddha*) of your innate inherent nature (*svarūpa*), the second spiritual body that is now your eternal spiritual identity, even though you are still embodied. Simultaneously, and fully integrated with that revelation, is the awakening of *bhāva*, the seed of *prema*, the deep emotional component of self-realization. It is a monumental and unprecedented milestone in a *jīva*'s journey to complete perfection on the path of *bhakti*.

When the word “attained” is used, the actual fact in this case is that Kṛṣṇa has revealed Himself to His devotee and has personally “awarded” the desired identity, form, services, moods and so on. That eternal identity is now an established fact and a permanent reality of your life. You no longer see yourself as your material body and identity, even though you are still minimally functioning in the material world through your physical body. This of course is why *bhajana kuṭīras* were invented.

This is also the stage where one is truly considered to be a “pure realized devotee” and no longer a *sādhaka*, a practitioner. At the stage of attainment, *āpana-daśā*, one will have occasional

*darśanas* or *sphūrtis* (momentary visions) of Kṛṣṇa in one's meditations in *samādhi*. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura reveals these astonishing details in *Jaiva-dharma*, and then sets us up for the final stage:

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: ...At the stage of [*āpana-daśā*], the faculty of transcendental vision appears, and at that time, the *sādhaka* can have *darśana* of his *sakhī* (Vraja mentor), and also *yūtheśvarī*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Even after having *darśana* of Golokanātha Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *sādhaka*'s realization is not steady at all times until he achieves the stage of *sampatti-daśā* (the final stage of full possession), in which his gross and subtle bodies are destroyed.

In *āpana-daśā*, the pure *jīva* has full command over the inert gross and subtle bodies. However, the secondary result of *sampatti-daśā*, the stage in which Kṛṣṇa's mercy is fully manifested, is that the connection of the *jīva* with this mundane world is completely cut off. *Āpana-daśā* is called *svarūpa-siddhi* (the second spiritual body), and in *sampatti-daśā* one attains *vastu-siddhi* (the third spiritual body). JD, Chapter 40, Pages 863-864

**(5) Finally, when he becomes entirely separated from this earthly existence and becomes eternally fixed in his longed-for spiritual form, he has attained *sampatti-daśā*, the stage of full possession.**

This last stage occurs when the material body finally dies, including the subtle body. Your last material body after countless bodies. Think about it. The connection to the material world is ended forever, with no possibility of ever returning. All *anarthas* are finally absolutely extinguished. At that point, you take birth immediately in Vraja from the womb of a *nitya-siddha gopī*, in the earthly Gokula pastime cycles (*bhauma-līlā*).

This is the third and final *siddha* body that will eventually reside eternally in Goloka Vraja, after perfecting the higher stages of *prema* during that earthly pastime manifestation. Haridāsa Ṭhākura explains these details to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura comments:

The coming of the appropriation stage.

When one's meditation on one's identity becomes fixed in *samādhi*, then the stage of full appropriation of that identity comes about. HC, 15.94

The practitioner's state of being at that time.

At that time, identification with one's spiritual form entirely overcomes the influence of the material body. After achieving this state, one is at every moment present in that form in Vraja, where he sees the Vṛndāvana forests through that form that he has made his own. HC, 15.95-96

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's notes:

In the stage of appropriation, one's sense of identity with the external material body is abandoned and one's identification with the spiritual identity and form takes over.

At this stage, one resides constantly in Vraja in one's original spiritual form. As one is now engaged in serving Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in that identity, one experiences the dawning of a great pleasure. As such, one remains absorbed in visions of Vṛndāvana Dhāma, one feels completely fixed in the spiritual identity and has visions of the Divine Couple's transcendental pastimes as if they had become manifest.

At the time of appropriation, one attains identity perfection; with the disintegration of the subtle body, [one attains] concrete perfection. In the appropriation stage, the fortunate soul attains identity perfection; when the subtle body disintegrates, concrete perfection and full possession. HC, 15.97

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's notes:

By worshiping the Holy Name in this way, the devotee inevitably meets Lord Kṛṣṇa face to face. Then, when his gross body suddenly dies by the Lord's will, the subtle material body is also destroyed. In other words, with the death of the gross body made of five elements, the subtle material body of mind, intelligence and false ego also falls away. At this point, the soul's pure spiritual form is manifested without any coverings and one can serve the Divine Couple in the spiritual world. Identity perfection is *svarūpa-siddhi*, concrete perfection is *vastu-siddhi*, full possession is *sampatti-daśā*.

The fruit of perfection through practice.

Having attained perfection through practice, they are the same as the eternally perfect *gopīs*, in that both serve Lord Kṛṣṇa night and day. HC, 15.98

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's notes:

At this point, those perfected through practice (*sādhana-siddhas*) and the eternally perfect (*nitya-siddha*) devotees all reside together in the same spiritual abode.

After attaining the full perfection of your *prema* in *vastu-siddhi* in the Gokula pastimes of that material universe, you will eventually be transferred to Goloka Vṛndāvana, the supreme eternal unmanifested realm. That is truly the final stage of this journey – your fully developed identity and bodily form, your relationship with Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and your *sakhī* group leader, your cherished services, and all other desires – completely fulfilled far beyond any expectations imaginable.

In *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī summarizes the progressive process that was examined in detail throughout this book, and then he describes how the perfected devotee

finally leaves their material body and moves on to the final stages. I quoted part of this section in Chapter 1, but the entire piece is especially relevant to the current subject matter, and is so comprehensive that it requires little commentary. It is an appropriate close for this section.

Now it will be described how the *rāgānugā bhakta* gradually advances through the stages of *anartha-nivṛtti*, *niṣṭhā*, *ruci* and *āsakti* up to the stage of *prema* and the direct attainment of the beloved Deity.

In *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* it is said that, “those who are especially attracted to the mood of the *vraja-vāsīs* and thus perform *rāgānugā-bhakti*, will attain that abundance of eagerness that is needed for performing *rāgānugā-bhajana* and will take birth in Vraja in groups of one, two or three at the same time.”

Here the word *anurāgaugha* means, “that eagerness that makes one qualified for doing *rāgānugā-bhajana*”. The *anurāga* mentioned here does not refer to the *sthāyī-bhāva* of that name, because the *sthāyī-bhāva* named *anurāga* cannot be attained within a material body.

The words, “he takes birth in Vraja” means the *sādhaka* takes birth from the womb of a *nitya-siddha gopika*, just as Kṛṣṇa’s eternally beloved *gopīs* appear with Him when He descends to the earth.

After that, gradually, *sneha*, *māna*, *pranaya*, *rāga*, *anurāga* and *mahābhāva*<sup>7</sup> (i.e., the progressive levels of *prema*) will become manifest in the *gopika* body of that *sādhaka*, by hearing and chanting and seeing the greatness of Kṛṣṇa’s eternally liberated *gopīs*. These moods could not possibly arise in the material body of the *sādhaka* in his previous birth.

In this way the extraordinary greatness of Kṛṣṇa’s beloveds in Vraja has been shown. In *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* it is said that the *gopīs* attained the pinnacle of transcendental bliss by seeing Govinda. Without Him they experienced a moment to last a hundred ages. Their statement in *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* 10.31.15: “Without seeing You we consider a second to last like an age.” is a symptom of *mahābhāva*.

One may ask, “Why don’t you say that when the *sādhaka* attains the stage of *prema* and leaves his body, he will take a *gopika* body in the spiritual world without taking birth from the womb of a *gopika*, after which he manifests *sneha* and so on, there in that body through the association of the eternally perfect *gopīs*?”

The answer here is: “No, that will not happen, because then one cannot get a harmonious acquaintance according to the human-like pastimes there, like: ‘Whose daughter is this *sakhī*? Whose wife is she? Whose daughter-in-law is she?’

‘Alright then’ one may say, ‘Then what is the harm in taking birth in the *aprakāṣa-līlā*?’ Then the answer is no, that also cannot be. *Sādhakas* or materially conditioned souls cannot enter into the transcendental manifestation named Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma. Only perfected souls

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<sup>7</sup> These progressive stages of *prema* will be examined in detail in Chapter 6.

can enter it. Even through one's own *sādhana* the moods of *sneha* and so on are not easily attained.

Therefore, those devotees for whom *yogamāyā*, for the sake of perfecting their moods like *sneha* and so on, arranges that *prema* is manifest in them after they take birth in Kṛṣṇa's materially manifest pastimes in Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma, and before they attain Kṛṣṇa's bodily association, they are taken to Kṛṣṇa's materially manifest pastimes in Vṛndāvana.

Because practicing devotees, *karmis*, and perfected devotees can all be seen to enter into the materially manifest Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma, it is experienced as both *sādhaka bhūmi* and *siddha bhūmi*.

Then if you say, "Where will those most eager *sādhakas* stay after they attain *prema* and until they attain a *gopīka* body, after leaving their material bodies?"

Then I answer: "After the *sādhaka* body perishes, that loving devotee, who has eagerly desired direct devotional service for a long time, will at once, by the Lord's grace, receive the gift of the desired service and the audience of the Lord and His eternal associates, just as He once bestowed direct audience to Nārada Muni.

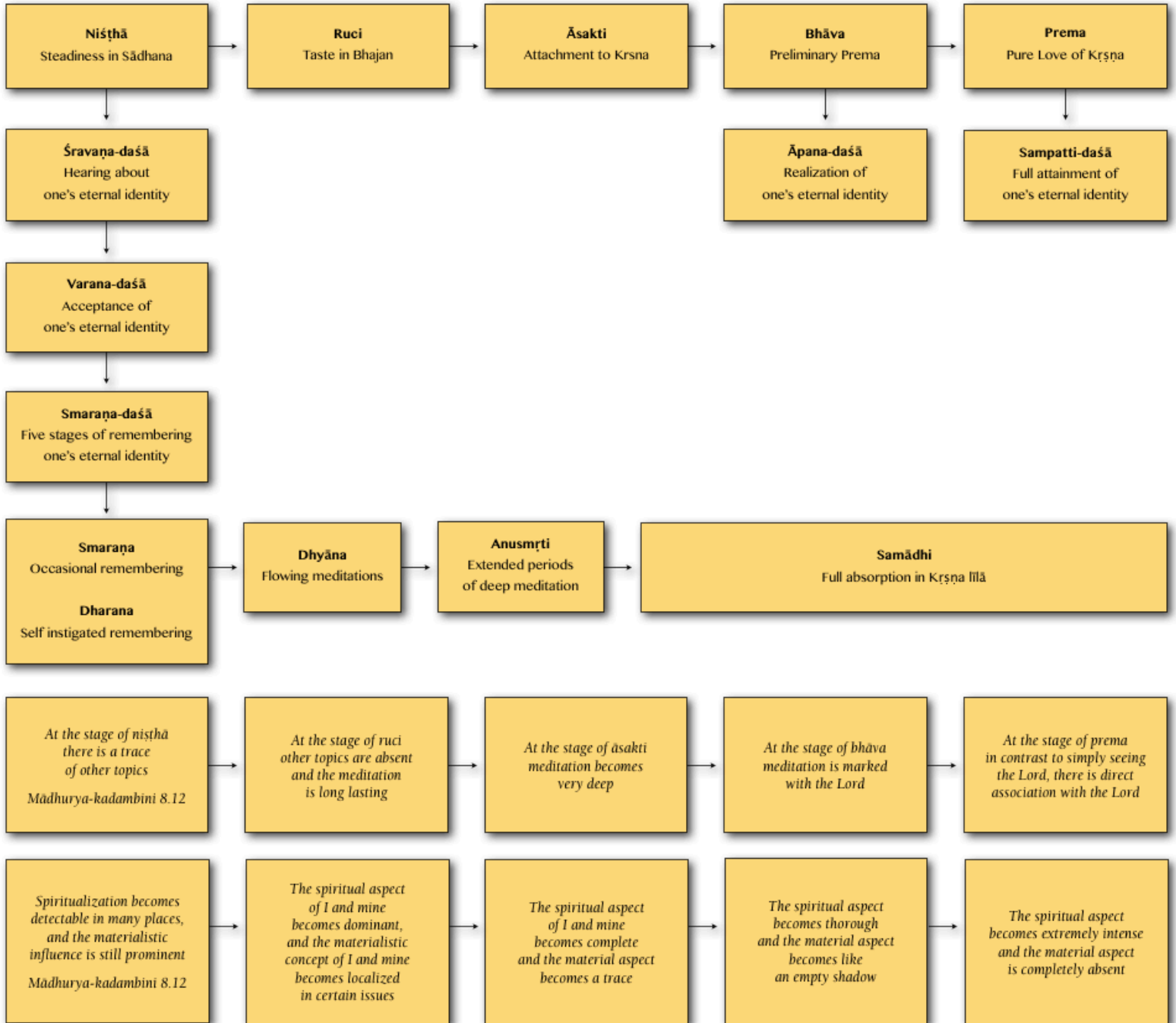
He will give the *sādhaka* a transcendental *gopīka* body. *Yogamāyā* will make that body take birth from a *gopīka* mother in the manifest pastimes when Kṛṣṇa descends to earth with His eternal associates. There will not be a moment's delay in that because the *prakāṣa-līlā* goes on without interruption. He will take birth in that material universe where Kṛṣṇa plays His manifest Vṛndāvana *līlā* at that time. Kṛṣṇa and His associates appear when the loving practicing devotee leaves his body.

Therefore, O greatly eager *anurāgi* devotees, don't be afraid! Be at ease! All is auspicious for You!" RVC, 2.7

## The final five stages of rāgānugā-bhakti

### The five stages of progressive realization of one's siddha-deha

### The five stages of remembering



## Chapter 6 – *Bhāva, rati, prema* and *rasa* – love of God in all its glory

### ***Bhāva* – an ending and a beginning**

*Bhāva* is a word that has many different contextual meanings, and it often appears as part of compound Sanskrit words that are related to *bhakti*, such as *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *sthāyī-bhāva*. *Bhāva* is translated variously as love, mood, feeling, emotion and so on. In this section I will focus specifically on the stage of *bhāva*, meaning the eighth and final stage of the progressive path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

Being a deep subject, there are many details related to the stage of *bhāva* that could be discussed, but much of it would be beyond the scope of this book's purpose. The essential knowledge related to *bhāva* will be examined to provide a comprehensive overview of this subject in the context of our journey of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. I hope this brief presentation will inspire readers to explore the referenced books to discover more about this topic.

The stage of *bhāva* is simultaneously an ending and a beginning, both of monumental significance. *Bhāva* is the final stage of the eightfold path of *bhakti*, that began with faith (*śraddhā*). It is the end of *sādhana-bhakti*, *bhakti* in practice, and the beginning of *bhāva-bhakti*, *bhakti* in pure love – *prema*. It is the initial manifestation of *prema*, which is the highest goal (*prayojana*) of *bhakti*.

*Bhāva* is the most important pivot point for a conditioned *nitya-baddha jīva*, because it is the turning point to end material existence forever and enter into the eternal spiritual realms to take our desired role in Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. As stated in Chapter 4, however unlikely it may be, even at the stage of *bhāva* one can fall down due to offenses, so it is possible to ruin everything and lose this rare opportunity.

Absent Vaiṣṇava *aparādha*, *bhāva* will naturally expand and develop into *prema*, which is the sole qualification to enter *bhauma-līlā*, Kṛṣṇa's earthly pastimes, the final stepping stone to His unmanifest eternal *līlā* in Goloka Vṛndāvana. That means we will have reached absolute perfection and will never return to the material realm again. *Bhāva* is therefore, the most critical milestone on the path of *bhakti*.

At the stage of *bhāva*, as *prema* starts to manifest, Kṛṣṇa finally reveals Himself to the devotee, and He awards the devotee's desired eternal form and identity (*svarūpa-siddhi*), along with the desired *rasa* and services. Viśvanātha Cakravartī gives his perspective on the awakening of *bhāva* in *Mādhurya-kadambinī*:

When *āsakti* achieves extreme maturity it is called *rati* or *bhāva*. *Bhāva* is the immature (budding) stage of the three *sat-cid-ānanda* energies of the Lord's *svarūpa-śakti*: *sandhinī*, *samvit* and *hlādinī*.

In other words, *bhakti* actually begins to manifest from the stage of *bhāva*. It is thus the blossoming flower of the desire-creeper of *bhakti*. Its outer luster is the quality of *sudurlabhā*

(rarely achieved), and its inner luster is *mokṣa laghu kṛta* (derides even the conception of liberation). Just one atom of *bhāva* uproots ignorance completely. Moreover, the profuse release of fragrances of the flower of *bhāva* invites Madhusūdana and causes Him to appear there. MK, 7.1

Rūpa Gosvāmī dedicates an entire chapter in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* to discussing *bhāva*. Here is the opening verse:

That part of *bhakti* is called *bhāva*, whose essence is *saṁvit* and *hlādinī-śakti*, which is one ray of the sun of *prema*, which will soon rise in the heart, and which softens the heart with desires to meet, serve, and exchange love with the Lord. BRS, 1.3.1

*Bhāva* is not something that you can “achieve” by specific efforts, rather, *bhāva* exists eternally and it is attained solely by Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. But, as Viśvanātha Cakravartī just stated, *bhāva* is very rarely attained, even after many lifetimes of endeavor. So when it is said that *bhāva* is rare, it really means that Kṛṣṇa rarely awards *bhāva* to those on the path of *bhakti*.

From *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

Now *sādhana-bhakti* will be defined:

Action of the senses, which produces the stage of *bhāva* is called *sādhana-bhakti*. This attained state of *bhāva-bhakti* is an eternal *sthāyī-bhāva* which is not created, but simply manifests within the soul by the spiritual energy of the Lord.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī’s commentary:

...This may give rise to the fear that, though *bhāva-bhakti* has been mentioned as the supreme (*uttama-bhakti*), it may not actually be the supreme goal of human endeavor, because it is produced artificially or achieved. The answer is given in the second line. This *bhāva* is eternal, and merely appears within the heart of the devotee.

...The emotions and actions of *bhāva* are all eternal and spiritual and not material because their appearance in the future will be accomplished by the extraordinary actions of the most excellent transformations (*saṁvit* and *hlādinī*) of the Lord’s *svarūpa-śakti*. BRS, 1.2.2

*Bhakti (bhāva)* is rarely obtained:

*Bhakti* is difficult to attain in two ways: if undertaken in great quantity but without attachment, *bhakti* cannot be attained even after a long time, and even if practiced with attachment, Kṛṣṇa does not give *bhakti* to the practitioner immediately. BRS, 1.1.35

Viśvanātha Cakravartī’s commentary:

By doing all practices through all stages starting with *śraddhā*, but without attaining *āsakti* (deep attachment), *bhāva-bhakti* cannot be attained. That is because it is stated that *rati* or *bhāva* appears only after *āsakti*. However, even with all *sādhana* and *āsakti*, the Lord does



not quickly give *bhāva-bhakti*. He does give *bhāva*, but after a delay. In this way, *bhāva-bhakti* is difficult to attain in two ways.

It was stated that *bhāva* is a ray or portion of *prema*. In *Caitanya-sikṣāmṛta*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gives a unique and esoteric analysis of *bhāva* as it relates to *prema*, and the progressive path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

When a person cultivates devotion to the Lord in the material world, *rati*, a portion of the *samvit-śakti* (knowledge potency) from the spiritual world, becomes the cause of taste for all objects related to the Lord. At that time also, a portion of the *hlādinī-śakti* (pleasure potency) bestows genuine bliss on the devotee. *Rati* is the seed of the desire tree of *prema*. When various other elements (*bhāvas*) appear to assist *rati*, *rati* combines with these elements and gives rise to the tree of *prema*. Specific examples will be given later in the discussion of *rasa*.

*Rati* is the smallest divisible portion of *prema*, beyond which, division is impossible. Just as the number 100 has a hundred small indivisible units, so *prema* has small indivisible parts called *rati*. All the states that are experienced in *sādhana-bhakti*, such as faith, *ruci*, and *āśakti*, are but fragments of one unit of *rati*.

...When the devotee advances, *rati*, one unit of *prema*, appears, and when all the units of *rati* are present, the soul reaches perfection. Until the person who has achieved *rati* leaves his material body, he is still in contact with the material elements. Attachment to matter is the cause of perversion of *rati*. But if he establishes *rati* towards the Lord, he is freed from that perversion of *rati*, and is situated in his real nature. CS, Chapter 5, Part 1

Rūpa Gosvāmī and Jīva Gosvāmī reveal even more profound insights related to *bhāva* appearing in the mind:

Appearing in the mental functions, *bhāva* becomes the mental state itself. Though *bhāva* is self-revealing, it appears to become manifest by the mind. Though in its essential nature *bhāva* is taste itself, it also acts as a cause of tasting the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, His associates and His pastimes. BRS, 1.3.4-5

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

...That which has the form of *śuddha-sattva-viśeṣa* and has pleasure as its essence, is called *rati*, because literally, the meaning of *rati* is "pleasure." Though this *rati* is self-revealing, because it reveals Kṛṣṇa and everything else, it manifests within the functioning of the mind of the Lord's dear devotees in this world, and then becomes one with their minds – it becomes their minds and their emotions. It appears in the mind as if by the actions of the mind.

...By its own arrangement, *bhāva* acts as previous and later states – as both cause and effect. Factually, *bhāva* is taste or delight itself, by its portion which experiences the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa. Still, *rati* or *bhāva*, by another portion, becomes the cause of tasting Kṛṣṇa's many forms and activities, which are most desired by the experiencer.

By the mercy of our *ācāryas* we are allowed to go deep into the essence of these esoteric topics. These details were provided for our understanding and guidance, so there would be no need for speculation about the true nature of these exalted states of spiritual consciousness. It inspires and provides serious practitioners with a clear vision of the amazing transformations perfected devotees experience.

*Bhāva* appears by absorption in *sādhana* or by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa or His devotee. *Sādhana* is the normal method for most, as *bhāva* arising from mercy is extremely rare. *Bhāva* arising from *sādhana* is discussed in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

*Bhāva* arising from absorption in *sādhana* will be discussed first. *Bhāva* arising from *sādhana* has two types: arising from *vaidhī-sādhana*, and arising from *rāgānugā-sādhana*. Absorption in *sādhana* (*niṣṭhā*) produces *ruci*, then *āsakti*, and then *rati* or *bhāva* for the Lord. BRS, 1.3.7-8

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Bhāva* may arise by *vaidhī-sādhana* or *rāgānugā-sādhana*. This gives rise to two varieties of *bhāva*. “*Sādhana* gives rise to *niṣṭhā*. Without developing *ruci* and then *āsakti*, how will *bhāva* arise?” This verse answers by saying that one must go through those stages.

Once again from *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains the two types of *bhāva* that arise depending on the type of *sādhana-bhakti* one has been practicing:

This stage of *bhāva* is of two types:

- (1) *bhāva* arising from *rāgānugā-bhakti*
- (2) *bhāva* arising from *vaidhī-bhakti*

*Bhāva* arising from *rāgānugā-bhakti*, being excessive in quality and quantity, is very thick or intense. It is characterized by an absence of awe and reverence, with a predominance of the feeling that the Lord is on an equal or lower level.

The second type, arising from *vaidhī-bhakti*, being somewhat lesser in quality and quantity than the first, with a type of affection for the Lord mixed with perception of the Lord as the all-mighty God, is not so thick.

Those two types of *bhāva* are tasted in two different ways in the two types of hearts possessed of two types of spiritual desires in two types of devotees. As there are different degrees of thickness in the juices of mango, jack fruit, sugar cane or grapes, there are different degrees of sweetness of *bhāva*. MK, 7.4

These are very important statements and should be understood clearly. Different devotees with different hearts and spiritual desires for Kṛṣṇa, and with different mindsets during *sādhana*, result in different types of *bhāva*. Different in nature *and* intensity. The *bhāva* that manifests in one's heart is appropriate to the type of relationship ones desires with Kṛṣṇa, namely one of the four primary Vraja *rasas*. All devotees do not achieve the same exact results.

When all of the elements of *rasa* come together with your particular *bhāva*, it becomes your *sthāyī-bhāva*, your permanent and dominant loving emotional condition. This stage of *bhāva* is a very powerful and emotional state of affairs for a devotee, wherein all emotions are spiritually surcharged with transcendental qualities never before experienced or imagined – and it's just the beginning of an eternity of expanding love and relationships. This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter in the section on *rasa*.

Having examined the esoteric aspects of *bhāva* and how it arises in one's heart and mind, what then are the general characteristics of one who has reached the stage of *bhāva*? Rūpa Gosvāmī lists these characteristics in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, (1.3.25-26). Rather than provide detailed explanations for each item, here is a summary list:

- (1) tolerance and equanimity
- (2) concern to not waste time on activities unrelated to Kṛṣṇa
- (3) disinterest in pursuing sense gratification
- (4) humility and freedom from pride
- (5) confidence that the Lord will bestow His mercy
- (6) deep longing for the Lord
- (7) taste for chanting the names of the Lord
- (8) attachment to discussing the Lord's qualities
- (9) attachment to living in the abode of the Lord

These attributes are straight forward and should be self-evident. Readers can study *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* for additional details regarding these characteristics. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura also elaborates on them in *Jaiva-dharma*.

The last items to be discussed regarding *bhāva* are the manifestations of *bhāva* that are mixed with unwanted elements. This is not directly related to our main focus, but it should be discussed for the sake of completeness regarding the topic of *bhāva*.

However, it is one of those areas with many Sanskrit terms, so for the sake of simplicity and easier comprehension I will summarize these variations and then we'll hear the details from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, who summarizes the section in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* where these variations were first introduced.

*Śuddha-bhāva* is the pure *bhāva* that has been discussed herein as the final stage on the path of *rāgānuṅgā-bhakti*, which leads to *prema*.

*Kubhāva* is manifested by *māyāvādī* impersonalists who engage in *bhakti* for liberation.

*Bhāva-ābhāsa* or *raty-ābhāsa* is a temporary incomplete semblance of *bhāva*, with intermittent displays of the external ecstasies of *bhāva*.

There are two types of *bhāva-ābhāsa* / *raty-ābhāsa*:

- (1) reflected – *pratibimba*
- (2) shadow – *chāyā*

*Pratibimba raty-ābhāsa* is when the *bhāva* of a genuine devotee is reflected in the heart of one desirous of liberation or sense enjoyment.

*Chāyā raty-ābhāsa* is when, by association with *śuddha-bhaktas*, neophyte devotees temporarily acquire a shadow of their *śuddha-bhāva*.

Now, let's hear some excerpts from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in *Jaiva-dharma*, Chapter 22:

*Bhāva* is known as *kubhāva* or *bhāva-ābhāsa* if it arises from a desire for material enjoyment or liberation, even if it is related to Kṛṣṇa.

The word *kubhāva* refers to any sort of *bhāva* that may arise in the heart of one who is contaminated with *Māyāvāda* philosophy.

Vrajanātha: Prabhu, it is often observed that when those who desire material enjoyment and liberation perform *hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana*, they manifest the bodily symptoms of *bhāva* that you have described. How is this to be understood?

Bābāji: Only foolish people are astonished to see the external symptoms of *bhāva* in such people; those who understand *bhāva-tattva* properly call this sort of *bhāva* “the semblance of *rati* (*raty-ābhāsa*),” and they remain far away from it.

Vijaya: How many kinds of *raty-ābhāsa* are there?

Bābāji: There are two kinds of *raty-ābhāsa*: reflected *raty-ābhāsa* (*pratibimba raty-ābhāsa*) and shadow *raty-ābhāsa* (*chāyā raty-ābhāsa*).

Vijaya: What is *pratibimba raty-ābhāsa*?

Vrajanātha: Why are they called ‘reflected’ (*pratibimba*)?

Bābāji: If those who desire liberation or material sense enjoyment have the good fortune to associate with advanced *bhaktas*, they also begin to adopt the processes of *hari-nāma-kīrtana* and so on. At that time, some reflection of the *bhāva*-moon in the sky of the *śuddha-bhakta*'s heart also appears in the heart of those who are thirsty for liberation. This reflection is called *pratibimba*.

*Śuddha-bhāva* never arises in the hearts of those who desire material sense enjoyment or liberation, but *bhāva-ābhāsa* arises in them when they see the *bhāva* of *śuddha-bhaktas*. That *bhāva-ābhāsa* is known as *pratibimba-ābhāsa*, and it does not generally produce any enduring benefit. It only bestows material enjoyment and liberation, and then it disappears. Such *bhāva-ābhāsa* may also be understood to be a kind of *nāma-aparādha*.

Vrajanātha: Please explain the nature of *chāyā-bhāva-ābhāsa*.

Bābājī: When a *kaniṣṭha-bhakta* who is unacquainted with knowledge of the self (*ātma-tattva*) associates with activities, time, places, and *bhaktas* that are dear to Hari, a shadow (*chāyā*) of *rati* may appear. Compared to *rati* itself, this shadow is insignificant by nature and unsteady, but it creates curiosity (as to the *rati* the *śuddha-bhaktas* experience), and it destroys sorrows.

This is called *chāyā-raty-ābhāsa*. The *bhakti* of these *bhaktas* may be pure up to a certain limit, but it is not resolute, and that is why it gives rise to *ratyā-bhāsa*. In any case, such *chāyā-bhāva-ābhāsa* only arises through the influence of many pious activities. By the association of Vaiṣṇavas (*sat-saṅga*), *chāyā-bhāva-ābhāsa* becomes pure, and subsequently gives rise to *śuddha-bhāva*. JD, Chapter 22, Pages 531-533

And finally, there is *bhāva* which arises spontaneously from past *sādhana*, or the mercy of Kṛṣṇa or His devotee. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura summarizes:

Bābājī: ...Occasionally the state of *bhāva* is seen to arise in someone suddenly, and without apparent cause. The explanation for this is that he practiced *sādhana* extensively in his previous birth, but that practice could not bear fruit until now because of various kinds of hindrances or impediments. However, *śuddha-bhāva* suddenly arose in his heart when these obstacles were removed.

Sometimes, an excellent state of *bhāva* like this may also arise suddenly because of Kṛṣṇa's causeless mercy. This kind of *bhāva* is known as *śrī-kṛṣṇa-prasāda-ja-bhāva*. JD, Chapter 22, Pages 533

## **Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself for the first time – and then disappears with His entourage**

Śrīla Prabhupāda told us that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī once said: “Don't try to see Kṛṣṇa. Act in such a way that Kṛṣṇa will see you.” There are many narrations in the *śāstras* that describe devotees having their first encounter (*darśana*) with Kṛṣṇa. Each devotee's experience was unique. Every Vaiṣṇava at one time or another has thought of that mystical moment when they will first meet Kṛṣṇa and finally see Him face to face. At what stage on the path of *bhakti* does that happen?

Nārada muni explains to Gopa-kumāra in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, that the direct *darśana* of the Lord is the fruit of internal *bhajana*:

We find everywhere that by seeing the Lord with the eyes one achieves His mercy in all its forms, and the most intense and excellent joy. Indeed, to see Him is the goal of hearing and of all the other ways of devotional practice. BB, 2.3.179

Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary:

Superior to the fruits of realizing the Lord inwardly are the fruits of seeing the Lord with one's own eyes. *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* and other *Purāṇas* record how Vaiṣṇavas like Kardama and Prahlāda received abundant mercy from the Supreme Lord when they met Him in person. On Tapoloka, the sage Pippalāyana told Gopa-kumāra about Śrī Brahmā's attaining similar mercy from the Lord through meditation, but that kind of success from meditation occurs in only a few instances for a rare fortunate person like Brahmā.

And besides, the Vaikuṅṭha messengers declare that the joy felt from directly perceiving the Personality of Godhead with one's senses is unequalled. This complete vision, gained by devotional service in the forms of hearing, chanting, remembering, and so on, is also the ultimate fruit of the devotional service performed by inward meditation.

We know that when one attains *bhāva* Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself to the perfected devotee. Who can imagine how incredible that experience will be? It is profoundly overwhelming to contemplate that encounter. In *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī describes this astonishing and unforgettable experience in an unprecedented manner:

Beginning in the Eighth Shower, Śrī Viśvanātha describes the appearance of *bhāva* and how it begins to transform into *prema*. Then he describes how Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself sense by sense to the *bhāva-bhakta*, who has become intolerably anxious to see Him. Although quite lengthy, I felt it was more than worthwhile to include the entire section, because it is overflowing with divine nectar and is inspirational beyond description.

Then *prema*, assuming the form of a magnet, attracts black Kṛṣṇa and makes Him appear to the devotee for a moment. At that time, all the senses of the devotee (eyes, nose, ears, tongue, sense of touch) become the receptacles of all the auspicious qualities of Kṛṣṇa: His supreme beauty, fragrance, melody, youthfulness, tastiness, *audārya* and *karuṇya*.

From tasting the extreme sweetness and ever-freshness of these qualities of the Lord, a greater longing, which at every moment increases, is born in the devotee because of his *prema*. Poetic words are not adequate to describe the ocean of transcendental bliss which appears at this time.

A traveller on a desert path, burned by the sun's rays during the hot season, finds shelter in a cool place supplied with a hundred vessels of ice-water from a divine pool under the shade of a vast banyan tree densely tangled with branches. An elephant caught in a forest fire without escape is finally bathed by unlimited water from a bank of rain clouds.

A person afflicted by mortal disease and craving satisfaction, drinks the nectar, tastes its exquisite sweetness, and experiences unbounded bliss. This cannot be compared. The Lord first reveals His beauty (*saundarya*) to the eyes of the devotee in this remarkable condition. On account of the sweetness of that beauty, all the senses and the mind take on the quality of eyes, and obstacles, such as paralysis, shaking and tears, are generated. From this the devotee swoons in bliss.

To console the devotee, the Lord next reveals His fragrance to the nostrils of the devotee, and all the devotee's senses take on the quality of the nose to smell. Again the devotee swoons in bliss.

The Lord then reveals His sonorous voice to the devotee's ears: "Oh My devotee, I am under your control. Don't be overwhelmed, but fully satisfy your desire by relishing Me." All the senses become like ears to hear and, for the third time, the devotee faints.

At the beginning of the swoon, the Lord then mercifully gives the touch of His lotus feet, His hands and His breast to the devotee, and reveals His fresh youthfulness (*saukaumārya*) to the devotee.

To those in the mood of servitude, He bestows His lotus feet on their heads, to those in the mood of friendship, He grasps their hands with His. For those in the mood of parental affection, He wipes away their tears with His own hand. For those in the conjugal mood, He rewards them with His embrace, touching them with His hands and chest.

Then the devotee's senses all take on the sense of touch and the devotee faints for a fourth time in a deep swoon. At the start of the swoon, the Lord then restores him by giving the taste (*saurasya*) from His own lips. This, however, is revealed only to those in the conjugal mood. The devotee's senses take on the sense of taste and he faints for a fifth time.

This blissful swoon is so deep that the Lord must revive him by bestowing His *audārya* (generosity). *Audārya* refers to the state in which, simultaneously, all of the Lord's qualities (His beauty, fragrance, sound, touch and taste) suddenly manifest themselves to the devotee's various senses.

At that time, *prema*, which understands the will of the Lord, increases to the extreme and there is a corresponding extreme increase in the craving. That *prema* presides as a moon over the ocean of bliss and simultaneously it increases hundreds and hundreds of waves and it agitates and creates an almost destructive friction in the devotee's heart. It then becomes the beautiful ruling deity of his mind in that condition.

This increased *prema*, which usually controls everything, as the moon presides over the ocean, then seems to withdraw its powers. It creates in the devotee's heart an almost destructive friction and tearing amongst the simultaneous tastes, a conflict of a hundred waves in the ocean of bliss. Then again, *prema* assumes the role of ruler, the presiding deity, and manifests its specific power, which allows the devotee to experience the different tastes simultaneously and without conflict.

One should not think that the devotee will not be able to experience the fullness of all the tastes because of their multitude, which may cause dilution of the very tastes. Rather, all the senses attain the inconceivable, astonishing, extraordinary quality to perform the functions of the other senses to appreciate the Lord's various qualities. In this way, they can experience more intensely the taste. In these matters, one cannot use material arguments evolved from material experiences. The inconceivable conditions of *prema* are not subject to mundane logic (*acintya*).

The devotee tries to experience the sweet tastes of the Lord's beauty, fragrance, sound, touch, taste and *audārya* all at once, like the *cātaka* bird who tries to catch all the rain drops in his beak. Then, seeing that all of these cannot find room in His devotee, the Lord considers, "Why am I holding so many wonderful qualities with Myself."

To let the devotee also partake of them all, the Lord manifests His *kṛpā-śakti* (also called *anugraha*), the superintendent of all the *śaktis*, by which the devotee becomes attractive even to the Lord. This *śakti* is situated like an empress in the middle of a lotus, whose eight petals are the eight *śaktis* (*vimala, utkarṣinī, jñāna, kriyā, yoga, prahvi, satya, and īśāni*).

This *anugraha* decorates itself in the eyes of the Lord and it appears in different forms as *vātsalya* (affection) in relation to His devotees in the mood of servant, and so on, (*dāśya, sakhya, and so on*). In some cases it appears as *karuṇya* (compassion). When it appears in relation to the devotees in conjugal mood it is known as *citta-viddravini akarṣani śakti* (which melts the heart of Kṛṣṇa and attracts Him). Sometimes according to the different moods of the different devotees it is known by other names also.

By this *kṛpā-śakti*, the all-pervading element of the Lord's free will influences the heart and causes great astonishment even in those realized souls who are fully self-satisfied *ātmārāmas*. By this energy, the one quality called *bhakta-vātsalya* (affection for His devotees), like an emperor, rules over all auspicious spiritual qualities such as *satya, saucha, daya* and *tapas* mentioned in the First Canto of *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*.

The eighteen condemned qualities of illusion, laziness, error, intense lust, fickleness, arrogance, envy, violence, exertion, lamentation, dishonesty, anger, longing, fear, partiality, and dependency on others are not present in the body of the Lord. By the agency of this *bhakta-vātsalya*, however, even these qualities become present at times in various *avatāras*, such as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, and are appreciated by the devotees.

But now these faults become excellent qualities. Attaining the power to taste completely the beauty, fragrance, and so on, of the Lord, and tasting each one, the devotee ascends to higher and higher peaks of astonishing experience. His heart melts on incessant realization of the Lord's unheard of *bhakta-vātsalya*.

The Lord, displaying His wonderful nature, says: "Oh best of devotees, many births you have given up wife, house and wealth for the sake of My service. You endured the miseries of cold, wind, hunger, thirst and pain, tolerated the contempt of other men, taking to a life of begging. In payment for all your sacrifice, I cannot give you anything. I have become your debtor.

Because lordship over the whole earth in the post of a demigod and mystic powers are unsuitable for you, how can I give them to you? One cannot give grass and straw, the enjoyment of cows, to a spiritual personality such as you. Though I am unconquerable, today I have been conquered by you. I am taking shelter of the creeper of your gentleness."

Accepting the sweet, affectionate words of the Lord as the ornaments of his ears, the devotee says: "Oh my Lord, my master, oh ocean of unfathomable mercy! You glanced upon me



while I was being bitten by an array of crocodiles, the infinite miseries of endless births and deaths amidst the terrifying current of material existence. Oh Lord, transcendental to all the material planets, Your butter-like heart melts as it is filled with mercy.

In the form of the spiritual master, You destroy ignorance and lust! By manifesting the *Sudaršana Cakra* of Your wonderful form, You have pierced those crocodiles and freed me from the clutches of their teeth. To fulfill my desire to serve Your lotus feet as a maidservant *dāsī*, You placed the syllables of Your *mantra* in my ears.

You destroyed my suffering, You purified me by the process of constant hearing, chanting, and remembering Your qualities and name. You made me understand how to perform service to Yourself through the association of Your devotees.

I am unintelligent, the lowest of the low, and even one day have not done You service. Such a miserly selfish person deserves to be punished. Contrary to this however, showing Your very self to me, You have made me drink nectar. You have mortified me by saying that You have become my debtor.

Now I am thinking what to do. Would I be presumptuous to ask You to pardon all my offenses five, seven, eight, a thousand or a million? I can definitely say it must be more than a trillion. Just let all the reactions to my past activities, intense and long-standing, suffered and to be suffered in the future, remain.

Previously, I compared Your dark limbs to the monsoon cloud, to the blue water lily and to the sapphire. I compared Your effulgent face to the moon, and Your tender feet, to newly sprouted leaves. Now these analogies seem like a pile of burned mustard seeds compared to a golden mountain, or like a chick pea in comparison to a touchstone, like a jackal in comparison to a lion, or a mosquito in comparison to Garuḍa.

By my poor intelligence, I have clearly committed an offense to You. Such inept poetry meant as praise unto Yourself is accepted by the common people. But after seeing the opulence of the Śrī Mūrti for a while I have just become shameful, and like an impatient cow my voice wordings will not defile the desire creeper of your beauty with the teeth of comparison.

In this way, the devotee praises the Lord, and the Lord becomes more pleased with the devotee. Then He reveals all the favorable accoutrements necessary for the devotee's particular relation to the Lord, imbued with excellent *rasa*:

Śrī Vṛndāvana, the desire tree, the *mahā yoga pīṭha*, the most dear daughter of Vṛṣabhānu, Her associates such as Lalitā and Her *mañjarīs*, His own friends such as Subala, the cows maintained by Him, the Yamunā River, Govardhana, forests such as Bhandira, Nandīśvara Hill, all the mothers, fathers, brothers, friends and servants there, and the other *vraja-vāsīs*. The Lord submerges the devotee in the enchanting tidal wave of bliss, and then disappears with His entourage. MK, 8.4-10

What more can be said? After an experience like this, it is very easy to grasp the concept of service in the mood of intense separation. This section by Viśvanātha Cakravartī is certainly worth reading several times.

### **Rati and Prema – love, and more love**

Throughout this book the phrase “identity transformation” has been used to describe the process that takes place through *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*. In *Mādhurya-kadambinī*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī describes some of the literal transformations that occur as *bhāva* begins to evolve into *prema*:

The devotee’s innumerable thoughts and emotions were previously bound tightly by the ropes of attachment to family, relatives, house and properties. However, when *prema* appears, it easily frees the thoughts from all those attachments. By its inherent power, *prema* transforms those material emotions, into spiritually blissful elements, as if submerging them all in a deep well of transforming nectar (*rasa*).

Similarly, all the attachments become spiritualized. Then, with those ropes of spiritual attachment, *prema* binds the spiritualized emotions to the sweetness of the Lord’s name, form and qualities. MK, 8.1

After crossing the threshold of *bhāva*, a devotee enters a whole new world of emotions based entirely on love. Love is a simple single word that is infused with many meanings depending on the context. In the eternal realm love has many unique layers, and all of the primary layers have been identified and analyzed by Rūpa Gosvāmī and his commentators. In this section the key aspects of *prema* will be examined. First though, we’ll review the terminology used by the *ācāryas*.

Notwithstanding translators’ selectivity and errors, in the books of the *ācāryas*, *bhāva* and *rati* are often used interchangeably, especially when *bhāva* is used to convey love, as in being a ray of *prema*. In its other prominent context, *bhāva* is generally used to convey specific moods, emotions, feelings and ecstatic experiences. *Rati*, on the other hand, is used primarily to convey the specific type and nature of the love and attachment of a devotee for Kṛṣṇa, as in the four primary Vraja relationships.

For example, we’ve all heard the term *gopī-bhāva*, which is used to refer to the general amorous mood of the *gopīs* and their relationship with Kṛṣṇa as lovers. It does not refer to specific features of the *gopīs*’ love, as when the definitive term *samarthā-rati* is used to convey the specific nature of the *gopīs*’ unique type of love.

*Rati* evolves in a devotee’s heart to become the *sthāyī-bhāva* – the permanent and dominant emotional disposition and loving nature. All devotees possess the full range of emotions, but according to their unique type of love, a specific emotional mood predominates and that defines the overall nature of a devotee’s loving disposition towards Kṛṣṇa. That becomes the devotee’s primary (*mukhya*) *sthāyī-bhāva*, or *mukhya-rati*.

The *rati* takes on a specific type (one of the primary Vraja *rasas*) according to the individual nature of the devotee. Just as the sun takes on various forms when reflected through crystals and other items, the *rati* takes on various forms when manifesting in different individuals. BRS, 2.5.7

There are other aspects of *sthāyī-bhāva* that are described in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, but to avoid going too far off topic, I won't discuss them here. *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* are the books to study for a comprehensive understanding. There are, however, seven secondary *ratis* (*gauna-rati*) that sometimes predominate temporarily over the *sthāyī-bhāva*.

From *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (2.5.40):

The seven specific emotions are:

- (1) humor – *hasā*
- (2) astonishment – *vismaya*
- (3) fortitude – *utsahā*
- (4) lamentation – *śoka*
- (5) anger – *krodha*
- (6) fear – *bhayā*
- (7) disgust or hatred – *jugupsā*

Therefore it is said: In a devotee, one of the five primary *sthāyī-bhāvas* and the seven secondary *bhāvas*, together making eight *bhāvas*, produce lasting impressions (even though they may externally disappear for some time). Because the impressions of the *vyabhicārī-bhāvas* disappear after they are covered by these eight, the *vyabhicārī-bhāvas* are not considered to be *sthāyī-bhāvas*. BRS, 2.5.51

*Rati* and *sthāyī-bhāva* are also often used interchangeably in the texts of the *ācāryas*. The general distinction is that *sthāyī-bhāva* refers to the principle that every Vraja devotee has a permanent, dominant emotional mood, whereas *rati* directly refers to the specific type of love that establishes and nourishes that dominant mood. For example, it is said that the *sthāyī-bhāva* of the *gopīs* is *samarthā-rati*, whereas the *sthāyī-bhāva* of the queens in Dvārakā is *samañjasā-rati*. Yet, the *gopīs* and the queens are all in *mādhurya-rasa*.

*Rati* is used primarily to describe the unique loving disposition of a devotee, and that love has its unique subsets of associated *bhāvas* or emotional and ecstatic experiences. To keep this presentation as simple as possible, the general uses of these terms will be maintained for the sake of consistency. There is a diagram, *Rati & Prema*, included in this section which illustrates the components and flow of *rati* through the stages of *prema*.

There are four primary Vraja *rasas* or relationship types (not counting *śānta-rasa*), and within each category there are many different types of *rati* expressed by the different devotees. The *rati* of these devotees is the love that then matures into *prema*. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains this in *Caitanya-siksamṛta*:

When *bhāva* or *rati* attains depth or thickness, it is called *prema*. When *prema* appears, the heart becomes completely tender or soft, and there also arises exclusive possessiveness of the Lord. When *rati* develops the qualification for enjoying pastimes with the Lord, it can be called *prema*.

At the stage of *rati* there is also possessiveness, but this possessiveness does not have the mood of exclusiveness. Pure *rati* also has the Lord as the subject, but it has not reached the stage where only the Lord and nothing else is the subject. When such a condition arises, that *rati* takes on a form suitable for enjoying Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. *Rati* that is suitable for *rasa* is called *prema*.

The *rati* or *bhāva* previously mentioned is the seedling of *prema*, but it is not suitable for *rasa* because it does not have exclusive possessiveness of Kṛṣṇa. *Rati*, when it matures as *prema*, becomes a fixed mood (*sthāyī-bhāva*). Without *sthāyī-bhāva*, *rasa* is not possible. CS, Chapter Six, Part One

Once *rati* has evolved into the mature stage of being one's *sthāyī-bhāva*, and has intensified into *prema*, one will then begin to experience the seven progressive stages of *prema* throughout the course of one's interactions and experiences of *rasa* within the pastimes. *Prema* is also used as a broader term for love of Kṛṣṇa, which includes all possible types of *rati*, as well as the progressive stages of *prema* itself.

Devotees engaged in *rāgānugā-bhajana* are meditating on their *siddha-deha*, each desiring a particular *rati* and *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa. When they reach *bhāva*, Kṛṣṇa awards each of them their desired identity and service in their specific mood of love. That love (*rati*) becomes the seed of their *sthāyī-bhāva*, their permanent, dominant loving mood and emotional disposition. The final stage of *bhāva* on the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* is the beginning of the development of one's *sthāyī-bhāva*, which eventually intensifies into *prema*.

*Rati* is not only the type of love expressed by a devotee, it is also a component of the self-conception that goes with it – I am Kṛṣṇa's servant, I am Kṛṣṇa's friend, I am Kṛṣṇa's wife or lover. The *bhāvas* are the emotional and ecstatic experiences that are specific to an individual's self-conception and unique flavor of that *rati*, and when that *rati* matures and thickens it then becomes corresponding unique flavors of *prema*.

*Prema* implies the higher levels of intensity and sweetness of each different *rati* or *sthāyī-bhāva*, which brings them to fruition over and over again within the all-encompassing and convergent experiences of *rasa*. *Prema* has seven stages of progressive intensity, and each type of *rati* is capable of attaining specific levels of *prema*. Only Rādhā and Her *sakhīs* are capable of experiencing all levels, including the seventh and highest level – *mahābhāva*.

The *gopīs* of Vraja have the highest type of *rati* for Kṛṣṇa – *samarthā-rati*. Within that *samarthā-rati* are many, many variations as described partially in *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*.

That *rati*, attaining a special nature, in which the desire for enjoyment becomes one with it, is called *samarthā-rati*. UN, 14.53

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

That by which the desire for enjoyment attains oneness with *rati* is called *samarthā-rati*. That *rati* attains a special status, inconceivably superior to *sādhāraṇī-rati* and *samañjasā-rati*, because by its very nature it controls Kṛṣṇa completely.

In this *rati*, which astonishes Lakṣmī by its waves of pleasure which are most astonishing, the desire for one's own pleasure does not manifest separately. For this reason, there is only the desire for Kṛṣṇa's happiness in *samarthā-rati*. UN, 14.55

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

What is that *rati*? It is most astonishing because it controls Kṛṣṇa. By its waves of pleasure it astonishes Lakṣmī. Because of this, the actions of the mind, words and body in *samarthā-rati* are for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa either intentionally or unintentionally. By those actions Kṛṣṇa attains pleasure.

The progressive stages of *prema* are described in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*:

When *rati* is firm it becomes *prema*. This becomes *sneha*, then *māna*, *praṇaya*, *rāga*, *anurāga* and *mahābhāva*. It may be compared to a seed, the sugar cane plant, sugar cane juice, molasses, solidified molasses, granulated sugar, refined sugar and rock candy. Sages generally use the word *prema* to denote the seven stages from *prema* to *mahābhāva*. UN, 14.59-61

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

The excellence of this *rati* is shown. *Madhura-rati*, when it becomes firm and not disturbed by contrary elements, becomes *prema*. *Prema* then transforms by showing its sweetness, into *sneha*, *māna*, *praṇaya*, *rāga*, *anurāga* and *bhāva*. The word *bhāva* is used instead of *mahābhāva* to show that it is the chief of all *bhāvas* because of its high excellence. This is like using the word *īśvara* to mean *bhagavān*. The word *mahābhāva* would be similar to using the word *maheśvara*.

The example illustrates the superior degrees of one substance in different forms. *Khaṇḍa* in the masculine means a fragment, a transformation of sugar and a flaw in a gem according to *Viśva-prakāśa-kośa*.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

After discussing the three types of [*madhura*] *rati*, the author gives the different names given to its various levels because of their particular excellence, along with an example. When *rati* becomes firmly rooted, unmoved by obstacles, it is called *prema*. When that *prema* rises like the sun, liquefying the heart like butter by its heat, it becomes *sneha*. That *sneha* then by increasing itself becomes *māna*. This, by increasing, becomes *praṇaya*. Then it becomes *rāga*, *anurāga* and *bhāva*, or *mahābhāva*.

One object, by changing its state, takes on different names according to the level of excellence. This is shown with the example of a seed - actually the young sprout in time becomes a stalk. Similarly, *rati* becomes *prema*. This produces juice, *sneha*. Juice produces molasses, *māna*. The molasses becomes solid (*khaṇḍa*), or *praṇaya*. Then it becomes sugar or *rāga*, and refined sugar, *anurāga*. Then it becomes rock candy, *mahābhāva*.

Due to the esoteric and exalted nature of this subject and its complexities, I'm only going to present brief descriptions, directly from the *ācāryas*, of the key elements of these phases of *prema*. This will provide an overview of the details necessary to comprehend the essential aspects of this profound topic. Many of these stages have sub-levels, but not all of them will be mentioned. These summary explanations, along with the accompanying diagram, *Rati & Prema*, will impart a solid foundational understanding for further studies.

The descriptions that follow are from *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*, where the focus is entirely on *mādhurya-rasa*. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura summarizes Chapter 14 of *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*, including the commentaries of Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī, in Chapter 36 of *Jaiva-dharma*, in the conversation between Vijaya and Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī.

In the diagram, it is indicated that *dāsya*, *sakhya* and *vātsalya* also have several stages of *prema*, with the same names as those used for *mādhurya*. However, it should be understood that the characteristics (*anubhāvas*) of those stages will be appropriate for each individual type of relationship, and do not exactly follow the *mādhurya* descriptions shown in the diagram.

Those who are anxious to participate in these kinds of intense loving relationships with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, should understand exactly how these relationships unfold and expand. These confidential details have been provided by the *ācāryas* to help us fathom these otherwise inaccessible truths. This knowledge also eliminates unwanted speculation about this subject. The *ācāryas* have provided the framework and Kṛṣṇa will fill in the details through internal revelations according to one's eagerness to learn and participate.

## **Prema**

When the relationship of love between the couple remains always without destruction even when there are causes for destroying it, it is called *prema*. UN, 14.63

Vijaya: How many kinds of *prema* are there?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: There are three kinds: *prauḍha*, *madhya* and *manda*. ...

Vijaya: If there are any more important points on this subject, please explain them.

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: *Prauḍha*, *madhya* and *manda-prema* can also be easily understood by one other type of characteristic. The *prema* in which separation is intolerable is *prauḍha-prema*; the *prema* in which the pain inflicted by separation is tolerable is *madhya-prema*; and

the *prema* in which forgetfulness may occur in certain special circumstances is called *mandaprema*. JD, Chapter 36, Pages 773-774

### **Sneha**

When *prema* ascends to its highest excellence, more fully illuminates the object of love, and liquefies the heart, it is called *sneha*. When *sneha* arises, one can never be fully satisfied with seeing the Lord. UN, 14.79

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Kāṣṭhām* means excellence. *Cit* means realization of the object of *prema*. *Sneha* illuminates the lamp of realization of Kṛṣṇa. There was realization in *prema* but in *sneha* the realization is greater. With *ghī*, the lamp has more heat and light. The heart becomes completely melted with love.

*Sneha* has two essential forms: *ghī* (*ghṛta*) and honey (*madhu*). UN, 14.87

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Sneha* takes on different names with different tastes because of different types [of *gopī*s]. *Sneha* can be like *ghī* or like honey. Because *sneha* means melting of the heart, that melting can be like *ghī* melting or honey melting. Thus, the names are given.

*Sneha* filled with great respect is called *gṛhta-sneha*. UN, 14.88

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Gṛhta-sneha* has more respect than *madhu-sneha*. There is some amount of respect in *madhu-sneha* also. Rādhā has slightly more respect for Kṛṣṇa than Her *sakhīs* and the *priya-sakhīs* and Subala.

*Sneha* is called *madhu* when the lover thinks, "You are mine." This *sneha* is called *madhu* because it is similar to honey in that it is naturally sweet, it possesses various *bhāvas*, it intoxicates with bliss, and it causes heating. UN, 14.94

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Madhu-sneha* is endowed with extreme possessiveness of Kṛṣṇa. "He is mine." *Gṛhta-sneha* has the mood, "I am his." It was said:

When the relationship of love between the couple remains always without destruction even when there are causes for destroying it, it is called *prema*. (UN 14.63)

This relation of love is either, “I am his” or, “He is mine.” When the former thought is stronger, and the heart melts, it is *ghṛta-sneha*. When the second thought is stronger and the heart melts it is called *madhu-sneha*.

Actually, both exist simultaneously in a person, but according to the prominent factor, the name is given. *Ghṛta-sneha* is, “I am his” and *madhu-sneha* is, “He is mine.” The cause of both is described in the section of the difference between one’s party and the opposing party.

Sweetness appears on its own in *madhu-sneha*. This is unlike *ghṛta-sneha* which becomes tasty by mixing with other *bhāvas*. In terms of *sneha* there are various tastes like crookedness and joking. In terms of honey, there are various tastes by taking nectar from various flowers. *Madhu-sneha* is filled with bliss because there are no obstructions of other things, and it creates heat or pride. And by drinking honey it is well known that one becomes hot and intoxicated.

### **Māna**

When *sneha*, attaining excellence, melting the heart, takes up non-cooperation to hide one’s intentions, and gives the experience of fresh sweetness, it is called *māna*. UN, 14.96

Jīva Gosvāmī’s commentary:

Non-cooperation is external. When *sneha* manifests crookedness it is called *māna*. What does it do? It reveals or gives the experience of a special taste of sweetness previously unexperienced.

*Māna* has two types: *udātta* and *lalita*. UN, 14.98

*Udātta* is *ghṛta-sneha*, which either hides its non-cooperation and shows gentleness, or which manifests non-cooperation as slight *vāmya*. UN, 14.99

Viśvanātha Cakravartī’s commentary:

From the definition of *sneha*, two types of *māna* occur. *Udātta* takes two forms. It appears gentle, hiding the real state of mind, non-cooperation. By hiding feelings the woman shows gentleness but lacks this internally. That is one type. When the non-cooperative attitude is hidden but manifests as slight *vāmya* – outward slight *vāmya* and inside full non-cooperation – it is the second type.

*Adākṣīnyam* means non-cooperation. This takes two forms: with an external show of cooperation and with an external show of slight *vāmya*. One should not say that only the latter type is *udātta* because the main characteristic of *udātta* is having noncooperation (which may show externally or not).



In addition, because it is suitable that the external show of slight *vāmya* is present in the best women during *rati*, *prema* and *sneha*, it is understood that they must have complete non-cooperation. Manifestation of non-cooperation takes place in *madhu-sneha* and non-manifestation takes place in *ghṛta-sneha*. Unmanifested non-cooperation takes two forms of hiding it completely and slightly manifested as *vāmya*.

When *madhu-sneha* takes on crookedness and displays joking, flooding the heart with an independent nature, it is called *lalita*. UN, 14.103

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

What is the crookedness? It floods her heart with an independent nature. *Ghṛta-sneha* does not flood the heart with an independent nature, and only partially affects the heart. Crookedness first manifests in the mind and body. Finally it appears in words as joking.

### **Prāṇaya**

When *māna* exhibits intimacy it is called *prāṇaya* by the wise. UN, 14.108

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Viśrambha* means confidentiality without reverence. This is caused by uniting one's life airs, mind, intelligence, body and clothing with those of the beloved. In spite of this, anger and other emotions are not unsuitable, because of the nature of *rasa*.

The cause of *prāṇaya* is said to be intimacy by the wise. Intimacy has two types: *maitra* and *sakhya*. UN, 14.110

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

This verse describes the cause of *prāṇaya*. *Svarūpa* means cause. The meaning is this. It was already said that *māna* with intimacy was *prāṇaya*. That meant that familiarity is one of its portions. It was not its cause. When vermilion is added to *haritāla*, it takes on an astonishing color. This is called *prāṇaya*. *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* explained the following, but that is a *taṭastha* quality:

When *sakhya-rati* is completely free of any touch of respect, though there are clear opportunities to show respect, it is called *prāṇaya*. (BRS, 3.3.108)

The two types are discussed as one. The two types of *viśrambha* are discussed without differentiating the two types in order to show that they are both *prāṇaya*.

The wise say that intimacy endowed with modesty is called *maitram*. UN, 14.111

Intimacy free of fear is called *sakhya*. This *sakhya* controls Kṛṣṇa. UN, 14.114

When *maitrya* mixes thoroughly with *udātta-māna*, *sumaitrya* arises. And when *sakhya* mixes thoroughly with *lalita-māna*, *susakhya* arises. UN, 14.121<sup>8</sup>

Sometimes *praṇaya* arises from *sneha* and that *praṇaya* produces *māna*. But sometimes *māna* arises from *sneha* and produces *praṇaya*. *Praṇaya* and *māna* produce each other. But in this chapter *viśrambha* was illustrated both ways. UN, 14.119-120

## **Rāga**

When *praṇaya* reaches a high state, and suffering is removed by happiness in the heart (on meeting Kṛṣṇa), it is called *rāga*. UN, 14.126

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

When *praṇaya* reaches a high state it is called *rāga*. This means many people do not reach that state. Causes for suffering are removed by causes for happiness because of attaining Kṛṣṇa. Causes of happiness are removed by causes of suffering on not attaining Kṛṣṇa. Suffering is removed by qualities of happiness. Where one experiences qualities of happiness in situations of suffering, it is not suffering.

When vermilion is applied to bee's wax, it takes up the qualities of vermilion and one does not experience the qualities of bee's wax. If a cloth is dyed with red dye, one experiences redness, not the white color of the cloth.

There are two types of *rāga*: *nīlimā* (blue) and *raktimā* (red). UN, 14.129

*Nīlimā-rāga* has two forms like the *nīlī* and *śyāma* trees. UN, 14.130

When *rāga* is devoid of decrease, is not clearly distinguishable, and covers *bhāvas* attached to it, it is called *nīlī-rāga*. This is seen in Candrāvalī and Kṛṣṇa. UN, 14.131

When the first infusion of timidity takes place and reveals more qualities than *nīlī-rāga*, but takes a long time to reach perfection, it is called *śyāmā-rāga*. UN, 14.133

There are two types of *raktimā-rāga*: arising from *kusumbha* and arising from *mañjiṣṭhā*. UN, 14.135

That *rāga* which quickly attaches itself to the heart and reveals and intensifies the beauty of *mañjiṣṭhā-rāga* is called *kusumbha-rāga*. UN, 14.136

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<sup>8</sup> Verse 14.121 is a logical extension from 14.111 and 14.114, so it made sense to combine them for this summary.

*Kusumbha-rāga* becomes fixed through special mediums. Thus, it does not fade in suitable devotees of Kṛṣṇa. UN, 14.138

*Rāga* which never vanishes, does not depend on other elements, and increases its beauty constantly, is called *mañjiṣṭhā-rāga*. It is seen in Rādhā and Mādhava. UN, 14.139

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

This *rāga* can never be depleted. *Kusumbha-rāga* becomes permanent in contact with certain qualities, but *mañjiṣṭhā-rāga* by nature is permanent. It is not dependent on other things. *Kusumbha*, by mixing with other *rāgas* became beautiful. *Mañjiṣṭhā-Rāga* is beautiful in all its portions.

### **Anurāga**

That *rāga* which makes the object of love experienced in ever-fresh ways and itself becomes ever-fresh is called *anurāga*. UN, 14.146

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Rāga*, previously described, which gives an experience of the hero with his form, qualities and sweetness, as if previously inexperienced, and which itself transforms by special thirst, and is experienced as if not experienced before, is called *anurāga*. There are two types: in which a portion of the object of love is ever-fresh and in which all aspects of the object are ever-fresh.

The *anubhāvas* of *anurāga* are: mutually being controlled by the lover, imagined separation while together, desiring to be born as an insentient being, and a sudden manifestation of Kṛṣṇa during separation. UN, 14.149

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

Though being controlled by the lover is a quality of *prema*, it is outstanding in *anurāga*. The special nature is that being controlled becomes newer and newer every second.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

The *anubhāvas* of *anurāga* are described. Controlling the hero is clear in *prema* and other levels of love. However, the hero is not controlled by the shyness, concealment, and so on, of the heroine in these *bhāvas*. In *anurāga* however, because there are no opportunities for concealment, pride and envy, because of great thirst, the control by the heroine is very evident. In *ujjala-rasa*, control by the hero and control by the heroine are both evident.

In *dāsya* and other *rasas* however, only when there is the absence of *sañcārī-bhāvas* is there mutual control by each other, starting with *prema*. It has been said:

The pure devotee is my very heart: what pains him pains me. I am the heart of the pure devotee: what pleases him pleases me. My devotees do not know anything else but me, and I do not know more than they do. (SB 9.4.68)

That the Lord is controlled by his devotee, and that the Lord controls the devotee is famous in all scriptures.

### **Mahābhāva**

*Mahābhāva* is the supreme and ultimate domain of ecstatic experiences in the realm of loving Kṛṣṇa. It is reserved solely for Rādhā and Her *sakhīs*. This is where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's love reaches its supreme heights beyond all other experiences. Even the *ācāryas* say they can only give a glimpse of it. Consider this a peek at a glimpse.

These are the primary elements of *mahābhāva*:

*Mahābhāva* has two stages of increasing intensity: *ruḍha-bhāva* and *adhiruḍha-bhāva*.

*Adhiruḍha-bhāva* has two stages of increasing intensity: *modana* and *mādana*.

In separation, *modana* becomes *mohana*.

The following excerpts are highlights from *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*:

When *anurāga* attains the state of being perceived by itself, is revealed externally through *sāttvika-bhāvas*,<sup>9</sup> takes shelter of the highest *rāga*, and spreads its influence in all devotees, it is called *bhāva*. UN, 14.154

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

The previously described *anurāga* is called *bhāva*, if it takes shelter of *rāga* and attains a state of self-knowledge. The word *bhāva* indicates the supreme state of this function, just as the word *bhagavān* indicates Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes the word *mahābhāva* is used, just as the word *svayam bhagavān* is also used.

...*Anurāga* refers to attaining the full quantity of its *āśraya rāga*. The meaning of the sentence is as follows. When *anurāga*, which has attained fullness of *rāga*, attains the perceptible state in women with *anurāga* who are about to attain *bhāva*, and becomes evident by *sāttvika-bhāvas* through appropriate *uddīpanas* (stimulants that nourish love), it is called *bhāva* (*mahābhāva*).

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<sup>9</sup> *sāttvika-bhāvas* will be discussed in the next section on *Rasa*.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

“Of all the states mentioned, are all states understood by themselves, or only *anurāga* or *mahābhāva*?” *Anurāga* and *bhāva* are not different. From *rati* to *mahābhāva*, all are understood by themselves. “Then it can be said that by being understood by itself, *anurāga* attains a state of high excellence.” That is true. *Bhāvas* have three states: self-awareness by the *hlāda* portion, awareness of Kṛṣṇa by the *saṁvid* portion, and being aware by both portions. It is said:

Though in its essential nature *bhāva* is taste itself, it also acts as a cause of tasting the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, His associates and His pastimes. BRS 1.3.5

When it is said that *anurāga* attains the state of self-awareness, it means it has attained a state of being, the state of causing action and the state of receiving action. In this condition, *anurāga* reaches its excellence and becomes realization of Kṛṣṇa (state of being). This is the first happiness.

Though Kṛṣṇa is realized by *prema* and other *bhāvas*, He is then experienced by the excellence of *anurāga* (*anurāga* as cause). This is the second happiness. From that realization of Kṛṣṇa, the excellence of *anurāga* is realized. This is the third happiness. Attaining a state of self-awareness means that *anurāga* attains these three types of happiness.

...According to the degree of the *āśraya* (the devotee), so there are degrees of action of *anurāga*. Though the moon cools the whole world by its rays, it does so in various degrees. Thus, *mahābhāva* acts in various ways according to various conditions such as separation and union.

This *bhāva* is rare even in the queens of Dvārakā. It is only realized by the women of Vraja. It is also called *mahābhāva*. *Mahābhāva* is the wealth of the essence of the best nectar and the mind takes up its nature. The wise say it has two forms *ruḍha* and *adhiruḍha*. UN, 14.156-158

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

*Mahābhāva* is explained in terms of its greatness. Having the treasure of the essence of the highest sweetness, it has the highest influence. Thus, it transforms the mind into *mahābhāva*. Nothing else can do this.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

Among all common substances there is nothing as tasty as nectar. Similarly among all types of *prema* there is nothing as tasty as *mahābhāva*. The mind takes on the nature of *mahābhāva*. The mind's condition does not differ from that of *mahābhāva*. Because the senses are functions of the mind, the Vraja women's senses and mind become the form of *mahābhāva*. By the actions of their minds and senses which are *mahābhāva*, Kṛṣṇa becomes controlled to the extreme.

### **Ruḍha-bhāva**

When the *sāttvika-bhāvas* become *uddīpta* (very brilliant) in *mahābhāva* it is called *ruḍha*. UN, 14.159

In *ruḍha-bhāva*, the *anubhāvas* are: intolerance of a moment's separation, agitation of the hearts of onlookers, a *kalpa* becoming a moment, distress when Kṛṣṇa is happy because of fearing he is in pain, forgetting oneself in the absence of fainting, and a moment becoming a *kalpa*. These appear during meeting and separation. UN, 14.161-162

### **Adhiruḍha-bhāva**

When the *anubhāvas* attain an inconceivably greater excellence than those of *ruḍha-bhāva*, the condition is called *adhiruḍha*. UN, 14.170

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Anubhāva* here means *sāttvika-bhāvas*. They become special, beyond *suddīpta* (most brilliant), because they are present during the state of *mohana*.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary to UN, 14.171:

In separation, because the separation has continuous meeting through dreams, or in the mind because of His sudden appearance through remembrance (*sphūrti*), the separation becomes filled with happiness. In *adhiruḍha-bhāva* however, there is simultaneous incomparable happiness and suffering caused by union and separation. This produces an incomparable happiness.

*Adhiruḍha-bhāva* has two types: *modana* and *mādana*. UN, 14.172

### **Modana**

*Modana* is the condition in which the couple exhibits all of the *sāttvika-bhāvas* in the state of extreme *uddīpta*. UN, 14.173

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

*Modana* and *mādana* indicate by the root meaning of the words, amorous enjoyment. *Mādana* comes from the root *mad*, meaning joy and trembling. *Modana* means joy. *Mādana* means a type of wine which causes intoxication.

*Modana* appears in Rādhā's group and not in all *gopīs*. *Modana* is the ultimate activity of the *hlādinī-śakti*. It is affectionate, endowed with all auspiciousness, and most excellent. UN, 14.176

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

*Modana* is the form of the highest activity of *hlādinī-śakti*. It is none other than the Lord's *bhāva*. It is *priyaḥ* or dear, the limit of sweetness in *mahābhāva*, and the best.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

This means that it does not appear in others like Candrāvalī. *Modana* is the form of the highest activity of the *hlādinī-śakti*. This is *modana*'s aspect as *prema-bhakti*. It is *priya* or dear by residing in his dear women as *madhura-rasa*. It is *śrīmān* or *mahābhāva*, residing only in the *gopīs*. It is *vara* (best) by residing in Rādhā's group.

## **Mohana**

*Modana* becomes *mohana* in the state of separation. Because of the lack of control during separation, the *sāttvika-bhāvas* become *suddipta* (most brilliant). UN, 14.179

In *mohana*, the *anubhāvas* are as follows. Kṛṣṇa faints during the embrace of another lover. Desiring Kṛṣṇa's happiness, the beloved accepts intolerable suffering. The universe becomes disturbed. Animals weep. Accepting death, the elements of the body long for Kṛṣṇa's association. *Divyonmāda*, which has many symptoms, appears. Generally *mohana* appears in Rādhā. These effects with unique qualities arise from the *sañcārī-bhāva* called *moha*. UN, 14.181-183

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Mohana* has four states: *prakṛti-sthiti*, *unmāda*, *prakopa*, and *murcchā*. Intolerable suffering and accepting death, and the elements of the body longing for Kṛṣṇa's association arises from *prakṛti-sthiti*. From *unmāda* arises *citra-jalpa*. In *prakopa*, Kṛṣṇa's fainting during the lover's embrace and agitation of the universe take place. With slight *prakopa* the nearby animals weep. With extreme *prakopa* there is also fainting, but because it is hard to endure it is not described.

When *mohana* attains an indescribable state similar to complete bewilderment with remarkable symptoms, it is called *divyonmāda*. It has many forms such as *udghūrṇā* and *citra-jalpa*. *Udghūrṇā* refers to various actions with no control, taking on a remarkable nature. UN, 14.191-192

## Mādana

*Mādana*, the essence of *hlādinī-śakti*, superior to *mohana*, making all *bhāvas* shine, is continually present in Rādhā. UN, 14.219

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

When the essence of *hlādinī* shines with the manifestation of all *bhāvas* it is called *mādana*. This is the supreme condition, which always manifests in Rādhā. Sometimes it manifests internally and sometimes externally.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Mādana* shines by the manifestation of all *bhāvas* from *rati* to *mahābhāva*, because *mādana* is without separation from Kṛṣṇa. Or *mādana* makes the manifestation of all *bhāvas* shine. Does *mādana* become *mohana*, another type of *mahābhāva*? This is superior to *mohana*. Understood by the *anubhāvas* to be discussed, it is endowed with the general qualities of *mahābhāva* and special qualities also. It is impossible to describe in detail. It will be said, *na nirvaktuṃ bhavet chakyā tenāsau munināpy alam*: even the sages cannot describe this [*mādana*] (UN 14.226).

I praise the astonishing moon of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's *mādana*, which is indestructible in all time, which melts the moonstone of the heart, is crooked though full, destroys frightening darkness by its abundant light, spreads happiness amidst suffering or twilight, holds a wealth of ever-freshness, is incomparable because of its supreme qualities as *mādana*, and is most astonishing. UN, 14.220

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

Its creation spreads over past, present and future and is indestructible. With this astonishing quality it unites everything. This indicates *prema*. It melts the moonstone of the heart. This indicates *sneha*. It is crooked. This indicates *māna*. It eradicates fear by its luster. This indicates *praṇaya*.

It spreads happiness even if there is serious offense, or unhappiness due to time and place. This indicates *rāga*. It has a wealth of increasing newness. This indicates *anurāga*. All of this appears from *mādana*, because it is the complete condition of *mahābhāva*. In terms of the moon, *āśṛṣṭe* refers to the full moon. *Prodoṣa* refers to the evening. Other terms are clear.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

Because of all these manifestations, *mādana* is incomparable. It is incomparable because of this definition of *mādana* having a continuous experience of happiness in the form of kissing and embracing in *mādana*. It is not replicated elsewhere because it only exists with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.



*Rādhā-danuja-vijayinor* indicates the *āśraya* and *viṣaya*<sup>10</sup> of *mādana*. Even though both of Them are *āśraya* and *viṣaya* in the various *bhāvas*, in *mādana* it is not so. In *mādana*, Rādhā alone is the *āśraya*.

In *mādana*, hatred arises in great strength, directed to inappropriate objects. Because of a state of continual enjoyment in *mādana*, one praises even someone having the slightest contact with Kṛṣṇa. One exhibits thousands of other *anubhāvas* as well. UN, 14.221

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

The word *ādi* indicates thousands of *anubhāvas* appearing simultaneously from the happiness of seeing, kissing, embracing and union with Kṛṣṇa, just as materialists sometimes enjoy a conglomerate in one form of all happiness and distress experienced over millions of *kalpas*.

However the experience of the materialist takes place with expansions of the body, whereas in *mādana* it takes place in one body. Because of the nature of *mādana*, at the time of seeing one limb of Kṛṣṇa, there arise thousands of enjoyments such as embracing and kissing Kṛṣṇa. Because this does not arise in separation it is inconceivable. That is indicated by the word *api*.

During union, *mādana* takes on unprecedented astonishing qualities, whose effects manifest as thousands of continuous pastimes. UN, 14.225

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

The eternal pastimes are famous as objects of meditation in the ten syllable *mantra*. [Gopāla *mantra*] Though *mādana* is defined in terms of Rādhā, in her absence it takes on many forms because it spreads to others. It was already said, *āsanna-janatā-hṛd-viloḍanam: mahābhāva* disturbs the hearts of anyone approaching. (UN 14.223)

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

This takes place in union, not separation. "In the last two examples of *mādana*, union was not evident." This verse answers. The *anubhāvas* or effects of *mādana* manifest in a special way – as thousands of types of pastimes and continuous *bhāvas*, such as embracing and kissing. The special quality of appearing as a *sphūrti* is shown by the word *virājante*.

When Rādhā praises the Pulinda women or the austerities of the jasmine, at that time, thousands of types of pastimes, such as Kṛṣṇa's embraces and kissing, manifest. The meaning is this. From the conclusions of *Bhāgavatāmṛta*, union and separation take place simultaneously in different *prakāśas*, or different dimensions of awareness.

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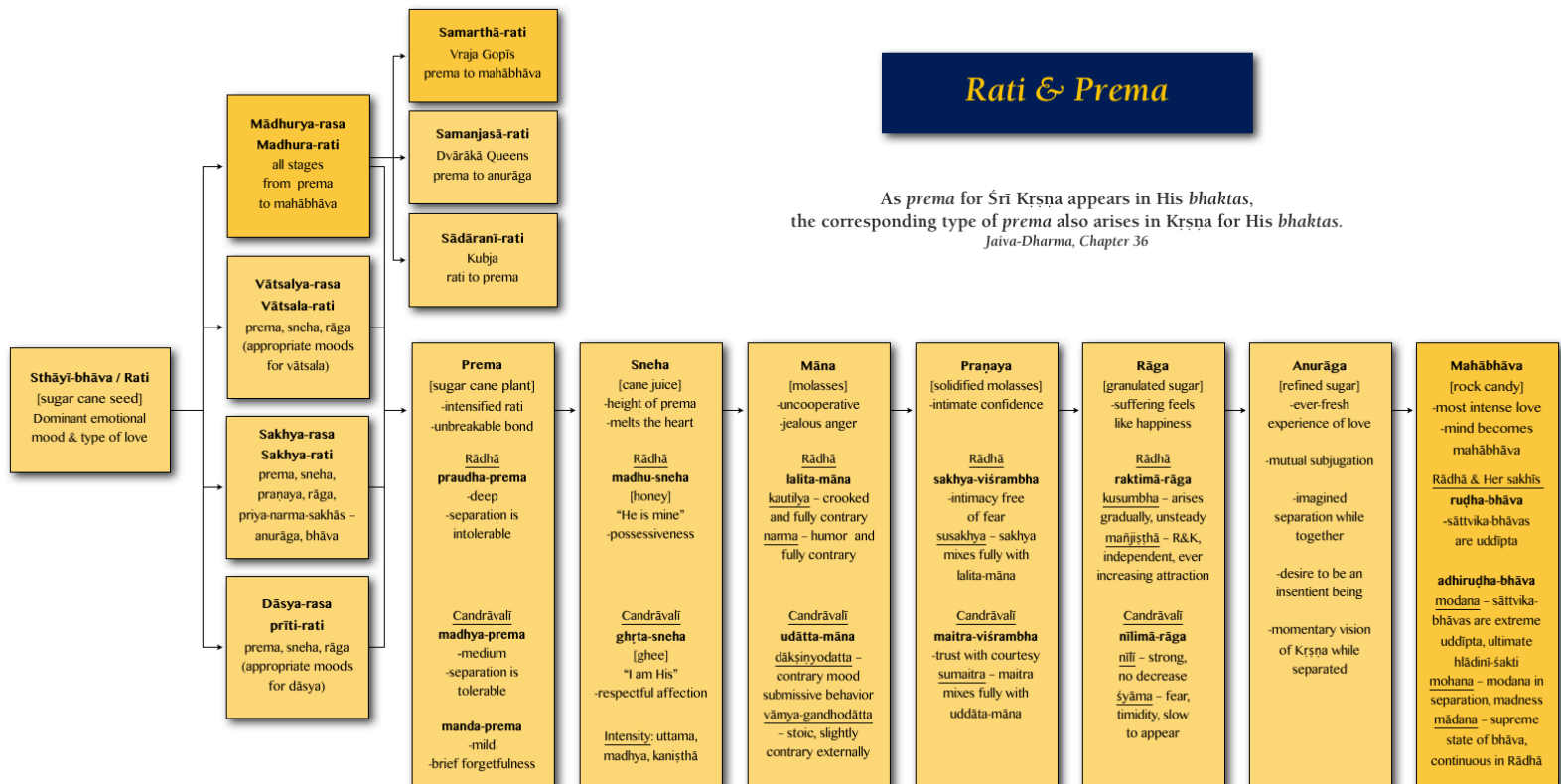
<sup>10</sup> *āśraya* and *viṣaya* will be discussed in the next section on *Rasa*.

In the *prakāśa* of union one identifies with uniting with Kṛṣṇa. In the *prakāśa* of separation, one identifies with being separate from Kṛṣṇa. This is the consciousness of Rādhā. But when the *sthāyī-bhāva* called *mādana* manifests, at the very moment of experiencing union by kissing and embracing, there is an experience of separation. In one *prakāśa* there is an experience of two *prakāśas*. That is the unique feature of *mādana*.

“But how is it possible that at the time of union one would have intense thirst for Kṛṣṇa?” This is astonishing. At the time of union, there are thousands of types of longing. This means that there is a *sphūrti* of separation. By the *anurāga* described, one should not think there would be a confusing mixture. First one experiences separation. Then by repeated remembrance of the beloved, Kṛṣṇa appears as a *sphūrti*. On attaining that *sphūrti*, and on embracing him, one does not make statements about longing. The experiences are spaced apart.

The movement of *mādana*, like Kṛṣṇa, is difficult to understand. Thus, even sages cannot describe it properly. However, sometimes *rāga* turns to *anurāga*, then *sneha*, *māna* and *praṇaya*. It is said in the scriptures that Rādhā and others in *purva-rāga* attained *rāga* directly. All the different *bhāvas* that appear in the women of Vraja are not described here because they are inconceivable. UN, 14.226-229

Thus ends a brief summary overview of the astonishing stages of *prema*, specifically in *mādhurya-rasa*, according to *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*, with Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī. Chapters 14-15 in *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* expand on these topics and are filled with priceless jewels of inspiration and revelation. [Resize the pdf page to expand the diagram]



To conclude this section, here are some additional details about these stages of *prema* and their sub-divisions. The two primary divisions in each stage of *prema* up to *rāga*, apply to Rādhā and Candrāvalī and the Queens of Dvārakā:

The *bhāvas* first mentioned in *sneha*, *māna* and *rāga* (*ghṛta-sneha*, *udātta*, *maitra*, *sumaitra* and *nīlīmā*) manifest in Candrāvalī, Rukmiṇī and the other queens in Dvārakā. UN, 14.142

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

The *āśrayas* of the two different types of *sneha*, *māna* and *rāga* arising from two different types of *prema* are described. *Purva-purvah* means *ghṛta-sneha*, *udātta*, *maitra*, *sumaitra* and *nīlīmā*. Candrāvalī has *nīlī-rāga* and her friend Bhadrā has *śyāmā-rāga*. Though these differences exist in *sneha* and in *praṇaya* also, they were not mentioned because they are very subtle. These *bhāvas* are also found in other women with *samarthā-rati* or *samañjasā-rati*. These women are also described.

The *bhāvas* mentioned in the second place in *sneha*, *māna* and *rāga* (*madhu-sneha*, *lalita*, *sakhya*, *susakhya* and *raktimā*) appear in Rādhā, Satyabhāmā, Lakṣmaṇā and others. UN, 14.143

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

*Uttarottara* means *madhu-sneha*, *lalita*, *sakhya*, *susakhya* and *raktima-rāga*. Rādhā and Lalitā have *mañjiṣṭhā-rāga*. Their friend Śyāmalā has *kusumbha-rāga*. In Dvārakā Lakṣmaṇā represents Śyāmalā. Thus, the first *bhāvas* of each type are found in Candrāvalī and her group and the second type of *bhāvas* are found in Rādhā and Her group. *Nīlī-rāga* is found in Candrāvalī and *śyāmā-rāga* is found in her friend Bhadrā. *Kusumbha-rāga* is found in Śyāmalā and *mañjiṣṭhā-rāga* is found in Rādhā.

The wise by their intelligence know other *bhāvas* which becomes a great variety from relation to other *bhāvas*. UN, 14.145

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

The other *bhāvas* are forty-one in number: one *sthāyī-bhāva*, thirty-three *vyabhicārī-bhāvas*, and seven items starting with *hāsya*.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

There are not only four types of groups [of *gopīs* in Vraja] - *svapakṣa*, *suhṛt-pakṣa*, *taṭastha* and *pratipakṣa*.<sup>11</sup> However, for fear of enlarging the text, these have not been described.

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<sup>11</sup> The four groups are: Rādhā's group, those who are friends, those who are neutral and those who are rivals.

Many other varieties exist. The meaning is this. Just as white, blue, red and yellow mix together to form various colors, so *ghṛta-sneha* and *madhu-sneha* can mix in various proportions, and the various *rāgas* can mix in various proportions. They then have different names and forms and *sthāyī-bhāvas*. Similarly there are these varieties of women in Vraja.

In *sādhāraṇī-rati* the *bhāva* is *dhūmāyita* – smoky.

In the *rati* and *prema* of *samañjasā* and *samarthā*, the *bhāva* is *jvalita* – luminous.

In *sneha*, *māna*, *praṇaya*, *rāga* and *anurāga* it is *dīpta* – brilliant.

In *ruḍha-bhāva* it is *uddīpta* – very brilliant.

In *mohana* and *mādana* it is *sudīpta* – most brilliant.

UN, 14.230

This happens generally, but according to best, medium and inferior natures of place, time, person and association, this may be altered. UN, 14.231

*Sādhāraṇī-rati*'s limit is *prema*.

*Samañjasā-rati*'s limit is *anurāga*.

*Samarthā-rati*'s limit is *mahābhāva*.

UN, 14.232

The *rati* of the *narma-vayasyas* (*priya-narma-sakhās*) extends to *anurāga*, but among them, Subala's *rati* extends to *bhāva* (*mahābhāva*). UN, 14.233

Although somewhat lengthy, this was actually a very condensed extract from *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* on a truly unfathomable subject. This confidential knowledge had never been disclosed until the appearance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. These revelations are for the benefit of those rare and qualified devotees who have intense desires to be part of these eternal affairs of love and relationships. This knowledge creates powerful impressions (*samskāras*) in the hearts of those who are aspiring for this *rati* and the supremely exalted heights of its *prema*.

## **Rasa – the ultimate convergence of all elements**

Rūpa Gosvāmī used the framework established in the *Nāṭya-śāstra* to explain the psychological and emotional complexities of the variegated relationships with Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual realm of Goloka Vṛndāvana. The *Nāṭya-śāstra* of Bharata Muni presents a detailed analysis of the dramatic arts, including the components of poetry, songs and drama, all of which convey powerful human emotions and experiences, known as *rasa*. This is the source of the terminology and the analytical structure Rūpa Gosvāmī used to explain the characteristics and intricacies of different relationships with Kṛṣṇa.

The word *rasa* has been translated literally and figuratively as, juice, taste, nectar, mellows and esthetic experience. When used in the context of Kṛṣṇa's *lilā*, *rasa* refers to experiences which

are the convergence of an optimal combination of elements, both personal and situational. In other words, *rasa* is achieved, or occurs, every time Kṛṣṇa and a select group of His devotees come together at the right time, place and circumstances, specifically arranged by *yogamāyā* and the *līlā-śakti* to optimize the loving exchanges facilitated by that perfect combination of elements. *Rasa* is multi-layered, constantly evolving and ever-fresh. Kṛṣṇa is *Rasa-rāja* – the king of arranging and tasting *rasa*.

Rather than present an exhaustive study of *rasa* in this section, I'm going to present an overview that focuses on the primary aspects of this complex subject. I have also included a diagram of the essential elements of *rasa*. Readers can study *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, *Jaiva-dharma*, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindhu* (by Viśvanātha Cakravartī), for more in-depth analyses.

In this book I have focused on the processes necessary to realize one's eternal identity. This identity is our eternal personality, our purified heart enriched with *prema* and perfected for a specific unique relationship with Kṛṣṇa. These elements of *rasa* are the relational constructs of that experience, all of which contribute directly to the overall experience of *rasa*. *Rasa* evolves from the ingredients of *rati*.

Rūpa Gosvāmī explains this in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

Because *rati* and the other elements are non-different from the *hlādinī-śakti*, *rasa* also is self-revealing and consists only of *rasa*. It has previously been stated that *rati* has two types: primary and secondary. Therefore, *rasa* also has primary and secondary types.

Though there are five types of primary *rati*, only one is considered because only one is manifested as most prominent in an individual devotee. That one primary *rati* combines with the seven secondary *ratis* to form eight *ratis*, which produce eight *rasas* (for one person). BRS, 2.5.112-114

Rūpa Gosvāmī's presentation of the subject of *rasa* centers primarily on the residents of Goloka Vraja and their relationships with Kṛṣṇa, fully manifesting His *dhīra-lalita* personality, as described in Chapter 2. However, also included as eligible participants in these experiences are *bhāva-bhaktas* and *prema-bhaktas* who are still embodied and waiting to be transferred to Kṛṣṇa's earthly *līlā* to perfect their *prema*.

From Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's summary of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* in *Jaiva-dharma*:

Vrajanātha: I have fully understood how Kṛṣṇa is the heroic personification of [*rasas*]. Now please tell us about Kṛṣṇa's *bhaktas* who are fit to experience *rasa*, and who are included in the category of *vibhāva* (as *āśraya ālambana*).

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: Only those whose hearts are overwhelmed by loving sentiments for Kṛṣṇa can be *bhaktas* in *rasa-tattva*. All of the twenty-nine qualities, from truthfulness to bashfulness, which have been described in relation to Kṛṣṇa, are also found in His *bhaktas*.

Vrajanātha: How many types of *kṛṣṇa-bhaktas* are fit to experience *rasa*?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: There are two types: the *sādhaka* and the *siddha*.

Vrajanātha: Who is a *sādhaka*?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: *Sādhakas* are those in whom *ruci* for the topics of Kṛṣṇa has arisen, and who have acquired the qualification to have direct *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa, but who have not yet completely surpassed all obstacles and difficulties. *Madhyama-bhaktas* adorned with the symptoms described in Śrīmad-bhāgavatam (11.2.46), *iśvare tadadhīneṣu*, are in the category of *sādhaka*.

Vrajanātha: Prabhu, are the *bhaktas* described in Śrīmad-bhāgavatam (11.2.47), *arcāyam eva haraye*, not eligible to experience *rasa*?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: They are not *sādhakas* until they become *śuddha-bhaktas* by the mercy of other *śuddha-bhaktas*. Only personalities like Bilvamaṅgala are genuine *sādhakas*.

Vrajanātha: Who are the *siddha-bhaktas*?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: *Siddha-bhaktas* are those who do not experience any suffering, whose activities are all performed under the shelter of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and who always taste the happiness of *prema*. There are two types of *siddha-bhaktas*: those who have gained perfection (*samprāpta-siddha*) and those who are eternally perfect (*nitya-siddha*).

Vrajanātha: Who are the *bhaktas* who have gained perfection (*samprāpta-siddha*).

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: They are also of two types: those who attained perfection through *sādhana* (*sādhana-siddha*), and those who achieved perfection by mercy (*kṛpā-siddha*). JD, Chapter 26, Pages 602-603

Throughout this book I have often referred to practitioners of *sādhana-bhakti* as *sādhakas*, as have the *ācāryas*. However, from the foregoing statements it appears that *sādhakas* are at the stage of *bhāva*, which may be confusing to readers. Viśvanātha Cakravartī clarifies this issue in his commentary of 1.2.1 in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, in the chapter on *sādhana-bhakti*:

There are three types of *bhakti*: *sādhana*, *bhāva* and *prema*. BRS, 1.2.1

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

“Let there be only two types of *bhakti*: *sādhana* and *sadhya*. *Bhāva* should be included in *sādhya-bhakti*. Why is it necessary to have three types? The answer is as follows. Later it will be said:

Those are called practitioners (*sādhaka*) who have developed *rati* for Kṛṣṇa and are qualified to see Kṛṣṇa directly, but who have not completely extinguished the *anarthas*. BRS, 2.1.276

In spite of the fact that *bhāva* or *rati* has appeared, the obstacles have not completely dissipated. Such persons are therefore classed as *sādhakas*. “Not having extinguished all obstacles” means that there still remains a trace of some serious *aparādha*, because the

effects of *aparādha* are very strong and long-lasting. In this condition, with even a trace of *aparādha* that generates suffering, *sādhya-bhakti* cannot appear.

...Therefore, *bhāva-bhakti* cannot be included in *sādhya-bhakti* (perfected *bhakti*). However, by no means can it be included in *sādhana-bhakti*, because in this section, which defines *sādhana-bhakti*, the goal of *sādhana-bhakti* is described as *bhāva-bhakti*. Therefore, it cannot be included in *sādhana-bhakti*, since the goal of *bhāva-bhakti* is not to produce *bhāva*. Thus, it should be considered proper to classify *bhakti* into three types and not two.

The conclusion is that those at the stage of *bhāva-bhakti* can also experience *rasa* even though at that exalted level they may still have some *anarthas* to overcome. The preceding statements by Viśvanātha Cakravartī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura confirm once again that *anarthas* may still remain even at the stage of *bhāva*. Remarkably, in spite of those *anarthas*, one is still considered qualified to have direct *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa.

In studying this subject, we encounter many Sanskrit terms that are a firmly integrated part of the lexicon of this topic. It should be no surprise that there are many layers and subsets of categories. As stated before, I'm going to focus on the elements that are related to our discussion. Here is a summary of the essential ingredients of *rasa*, based on Rūpa Gosvāmī's descriptions in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*.

To start with, there are two primary causes (*vibhāvas*) of stimulating and experiencing love (*prema*). The first obvious cause is the combination of two persons (*ālambanas*) in a unique relationship, who share the experiences of this love: Kṛṣṇa, the object and receiver of love (*viṣaya*), and His devotee, who is the reservoir and giver of that love (*āśraya*). Sometimes these positions may be reversed, especially in the love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

The devotees (*āśraya*) include eternally liberated associates (*nitya-siddhas*), those who have attained perfection by practice (*sādhana-siddhas*) or mercy (*kṛpā-siddhas*), as well as those who have attained *prema* but are still embodied (*prema-bhaktas*).

The second cause (*vibhāva*) are the numerous stimulants (*uddīpanas*) that arouse and nourish this love in different ways, causing both persons to taste the many unique flavors of their reciprocal love. These are things such as Kṛṣṇa's physical attributes, His personality and qualities, His activities, objects associated with Him (flute, ankle bells...), the seasons, location, time of day and so on. Each of the main components of *vibhāva*: *viṣaya-ālambana*, *āśraya-ālambana* and *uddīpanas*, have further subsets of categories.

Devotees who are established in their permanent, dominant relational disposition and unique loving mood (*sthāyī-bhāva*) will experience many different emotional and physical reactions caused by the ebb and flow of different types of ecstasies arising from their love for Kṛṣṇa. These manifest in the numerous mental states and emotional experiences they have during the diverse pastimes.

These are various emotions (*vyabhicārī-bhāvas* or *sañcārī-bhāvas*) which appear from personal interactions, such as: self-disparagement, despondency, humility, fatigue, pride, apprehension, excitement, madness, shyness, anxiety, fortitude, jubilation, ardent desire and others. These

transitory emotions rise and fall in stages, like waves, and nourish the dominant mood of the devotee.

Some of these internal experiences will cause the devotee to sing, dance, laugh and shout out loud (*anubhāvas*) as a conscious willful expression of the ecstatic feelings. Other external bodily reactions appear spontaneously without willfully choosing, such as becoming stunned, horripilation, tears, faltering voice, fainting and so on (*sāttvika-bhāvas*). These particular manifestations have five stages of increasing intensity corresponding to how many of the symptoms occur simultaneously and to what extent.

When all of the above elements come together perfectly in any unique combination of endlessly variegated possibilities, within the context of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, it creates the experience of *rasa*. Because it is *rasa* saturated with intense *prema* and the purest expression of *bhakti*, it is also called, *prema-bhakti-rasa*.

In *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Rūpa Gosvāmī explains the threshold for attaining *rasa*:

As long as one among the five primary *ratis*, along with the seven secondary *ratis*, does not attain the state of *rasa* in an individual, the eight are called *sthāyī-bhāvas*. If they remain independent, then the thirty-three *vyabhicārī-bhāvas*, the eight *sāttvika-bhāvas* are called forty-nine *bhāvas*, not *sthāyī-bhāvas*. BRS, 2.5.73-74

The primary and secondary *ratis* produce *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, *sāttvika-bhāvas* and *vyabhicārī-bhāvas* through hearing, experiencing, or remembering Kṛṣṇa. All of these combine to become *rasa* in the devotees. BRS, 2.5.79

Thus, through *rasa*, the devotees directly experience an astonishing, deep bliss arising from realization of Kṛṣṇa and related things. Though the *ratis* and elements starting with *vibhāva* become one entity in the state of *rasa*, there is still awareness of their difference because of their original separate identities. BRS, 2.5.81-82

It has been said: First, the ingredients have distinct forms, but when they mix and attain the form of *rasa* they assume oneness. However, when pepper and sugar are mixed together in a drink one can still recognize pepper and sugar. Similarly, in *rasa*, though *vibhāva* and the other elements become one entity in *rasa*, they can be recognized in a subtle form. BRS, 2.5.83-84

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gives a beautiful and clear summary of these elements of *rasa* in *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*:

There are five distinct elements in *rasa*: *sthāyī-bhāva*, *vibhāva*, *anubhāva*, *sāttvika-bhāva* and *sañcārī* or *vyabhicārī-bhāva*.

*sthāyī-bhāva* is the root of *rasa*

*vibhāvas* are the causes of *rasa*

*anubhāvas* are the effects of *rasa*



*sāttvika-bhāvas* are the special effects of *rasa*

*vyabhicārī-bhāvas* are assistants to *rasa* (sometimes called *sañcārī-bhāvas*)

*Vibhāva*, *anubhāva*, *sāttvika-bhāva* and *vyabhicārī-bhāva* bring the *sthāyī-bhāva* to the state of relishability and thus give it the status of *rasa*. These subjects will be revealed more elaborately and precisely, but only to the degree that the *sādhaka* or practitioner tastes or experiences the *rasas* directly will he be able to appreciate what is presented.

*Rasa* is not a matter of understanding, but a matter of tasting. The two preliminary stages of knowledge are inquiry and reception. If these are not completed, the final stage of knowledge, experiencing or tasting, will not arise. What is commonly called knowledge is either inquiry or reception, but not tasting. There is no manifestation of *rasas* without tasting.

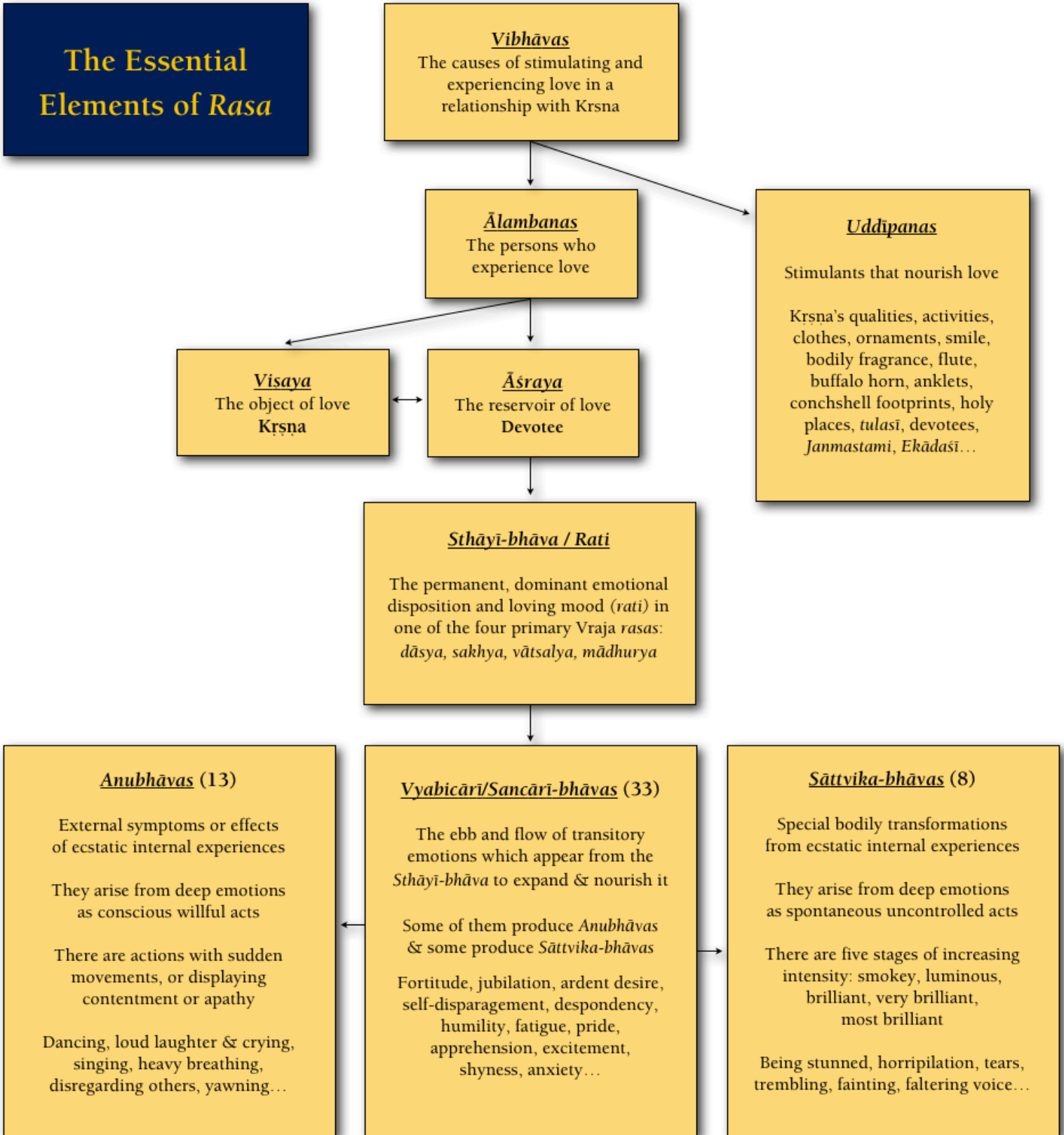
*Sthāyī-bhāva* will be examined first. That emotional state, which in operation holds all other states under its control, is called *sthāyī-bhāva*. When a person develops to the stage of *bhāva*, and *rati* becomes exclusively possessive of Kṛṣṇa, and becomes deep to some extent, it becomes *sthāyī-bhāva*, which is suitable for *rasa*.

This *sthāyī-bhāva* is limited to one dominant emotional mood. Even when it surpasses this limitation and enters the realm of *prema* it will still be called *rati*, as *prema* is distinguishable from *rati* by being beyond limits in all cases. *Prema*'s nature is to appropriate the excellence of *rasa* for itself. *Rati*, as it elevates itself, becomes *sthāyī-bhāva*.

Whether a person who has developed *rati* is a *sādhaka* or a *siddha*, he is qualified for tasting *rasa*. A *sādhaka* for *prema* (an aspirant for *prema* – *premaruruksu*) is a person who has developed *rati* but still has an obstacle to surpass. By progressing through *niṣṭhā*, *ruci* and *āsakti*, the *anarthas* have gradually been dissolved. The material attachment is also gone, but as long as the subtle body remains, he still has contact with matter. That will be very quickly removed by Kṛṣṇa's mercy.

That contact with matter is called an obstacle. As long as that obstacle remains, the soul cannot attain *vastu-siddhi*, his real spiritual form. However, when a person with *rati* advances to *prema* he is qualified for obtaining *rasa* (even while possessing a material body), and that attainment is called *svarūpa-siddhi*. CS, Chapter 7, Part 1

In Vraja, the *prema* between Kṛṣṇa and His devotees is fully nourished by *rasa*. In other words, *prema* is relished and experienced in ever expanding ways because of *rasa*. The different seasons, the weather, the unlimited varieties of forests, the different times of the day and night, all of the numerous incredible personalities, the different moods, emotions and interactions, the endless variety of pastimes, all of these and more contribute to and expand *rasa*. There are endless layers of subtleties and Kṛṣṇa and His devotees relish every aspect in ever-fresh, unlimited ways, eternally.



We always hear that *prema* is the highest goal - pure love for Kṛṣṇa. This is certainly true, but *rasa* is the experience which includes *prema* as its heart and other elements as stimulants to create varieties of flavors and intensity. Therefore, *rasa* in some ways is the ultimate experience, because if all the elements do not come together properly, *rasa* is not attained and that is said to diminish the overall experience.

From *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

That which becomes even more intensely relished in the heart made bright with *hlādinī* and *sāṃvit śaktis* (attainment of *bhāva*), after surpassing the stage of distinguishing the constituent *bhāvas*, and which becomes more astonishing in bliss than *bhāva*, is called *rasa*. BRS, 2.5.132

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

The difference between *bhāva* (*sthāyī-bhāva*) and *rasa* is now described in two verses, though they are the same in one sense, because they exist as cause and effect. *Sattva* here refers to *śuddha-sattva-viśeṣa* previously described as the cause of *bhāva* (*rati*). The difference is like that between *samādhi* (realization) and *dhyāna* (meditation by which one achieves realization).

That which the wise person, who has dedicated his intelligence only to the Lord, experiences in the heart, which realizes *vibhāva* and the other elements as separate entities, through deep impressions of previous *bhakti*, is called *bhāva*. BRS, 2.5.133

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

First a person attains *bhāva* by *vibhāva* and other elements manifesting. Then the *svarūpa* of *bhāva* appears. Then by those *vibhāvas* and other elements, *rasa* appears. This is the order. Two verses describe the difference between *rati* and *rasa* by describing their particular natures.

That which surpasses the stage of distinguishing *vibhāva*, *vyabhicārī-bhāvas* and other elements and attains astonishing taste is called *rasa*. What is the nature of that *rasa*? It produces more amazement than *rati*.

*Bhāva* or *rati* is experienced in the heart which ascertains the *vibhāvas*, *vyabhicārī-bhāvas* and other elements. At the time of directly realizing *rasa* however, there is no awareness of *vibhāvas*, *vyabhicārī-bhāvas* and other elements as separate entities.

However at the time of realizing *rati*, there is awareness of *vibhāvas* and other elements as separate entities. It should be understood that the difference between *rasa* and *rati* is the depth of relishing the *rasa*.

In other words, in the beginning of *bhāva* there is conscious perception of the distinction between these various elements of *rasa*, but as *rati* evolves, the emotional experiences

predominate and awareness of the technical details fades into the background. This is as it should be, because matters of love are affairs of the heart and not the intellect.

Using this framework of the essential elements of *rasa*, Rūpa Gosvāmī was able to systematically describe and compare each of the four primary Vraja *rasas*: *dāsyā-rasa*, *sakhya-rasa*, *vātsalya-rasa* and *mādhurya-rasa*. His method was to extract the specific subsets of components from these core elements as they apply to each of the main relationships, thus differentiating and highlighting their unique characteristics.

Typically, Śrī Rūpa first describes the *alambanas*, namely, the *āśraya*, i.e., the different types of devotees within each relationship category, and the variety of ways they relate to the *viṣaya*, Kṛṣṇa, who is also described specifically in the context of each relationship and the devotees' different perceptions of Him therein.

Then he describes the subsets of *uddīpanas*, *vyabhicārī-bhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, and *sāttvika-bhāvas* that typically apply to, and manifest in, each of the four types of relationships. He then explains the characteristics of the *sthāyī-bhāva* (*rati*) of each relationship, along with its variations and gradations. Thus, all elements are fully examined for a comprehensive picture of the overall *rasa* for each relationship type.

I hope this summary study, which focused on the essential elements of *rasa* that are relevant to our journey of identity realization, will yield the intended results. This important knowledge prepares us for the various ecstatic emotional experiences we will have in conjunction with our relationship with Kṛṣṇa in our new identity. Thoughtful practitioners are encouraged to study this subject in depth.

### **Rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana in separation – so near, yet so far**

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas have all heard that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's example was one of *rāgānugā-bhakti* in the mood of separation of the *gopīs*, specifically Rādhā. The separation referred to is specifically what occurred in Kṛṣṇa's earthly pastimes, where He leaves Vṛndāvana and moves to Mathurā and then Dvārakā.

Experiencing the *bhāvas* of Rādhā's *prema*, Lord Caitanya, internally as Kṛṣṇa, tasted Her extreme levels of *prema* (*rāga*, *anurāga*, *mahābhāva*) as described in the previous section, and especially the separation (*vipralambha*) She felt when Kṛṣṇa left for Mathurā. However, that extended separation only takes place in the earthly *līlā* and not in the unmanifest eternal *līlā* (*aprakāṣa-nitya-līlā*). In *aprakāṣa-nitya-līlā* the separation is measured in hours, at intervals during the eight daily time periods. Kṛṣṇa remains eternally in Goloka Vraja. He never leaves.

It is important to understand that separation is not a state that exists independently of any other. Separation is also not the desired goal of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees in Vraja. In other words, separation only has value if there is union afterwards, because the sole purpose of separation is to enhance union, which is the most desired goal of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*. Without union, separation is meaningless and would not bring bliss.

This is discussed in great detail (almost fourteen pages of commentary) in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, after Rūpa Gosvāmī discusses the four types of separation in the Goloka *līlā*. Here are a few key excerpts:

There is no separation at all of the Vraja women from Kṛṣṇa, who eternally enjoys in the forests of Vṛndāvana with pastimes like the *rāsa* dance. From the *Padma Purāna, Pātāla-khaṇḍa, Mathurā-mahātmya*: There Kṛṣṇa plays in the association of the cows, cowherds and *gopīs*. UN, 15.186-187

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

Having described the separation of Kṛṣṇa and his associates, the author now speaks in order to dispel the unhappiness of that situation. Separation is the special feature of the pastimes on earth. Verse 186 describes the special nature of the *aprakāṭa* pastimes, where the pastimes of enjoyment are continuous. The word *vṛndārāṇye* refers to the *aprakāṭa* place.

The scriptural proof is given in verse 187. Kṛṣṇa plays with the cows, cowherds and *gopīs*. The present tense is used to indicate the continuous nature of these acts. As with the previous verse, a distinction from the *prakāṭa* pastimes on earth is established. Without that distinction, the events could not take place eternally. Because the meaning of scripture cannot be denied, in these pastimes the *acintya-śakti* enables these two types to take place.

...Therefore, after great separation, finally there must be a description of meeting. This should be without any interference. If there is happiness in a particular expansion, that happiness should not disappear, like the elephant bathing and again becoming dirty. Unresolved separation is not the method of *prema*, but rather would be a sign that Kṛṣṇa is interested in His own happiness, because He disregards His dear devotees.

What to speak of Kṛṣṇa's dear devotees, even material *rasa* texts say, *na vinā vipralambhena*: joy does not exist without separation. (*Sarasvatī-kanthābharāṇa* 5.52) **There is agreement that separation exists for the perfection of union. Following from this, union without obstacles should be the final result of many separations.** *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* and other works like *Nāṭaka-candrikā*, and types of worship as well, taking shelter of the *prakāṭa* manifestations, show this understanding. The agreement of Śukadeva and others in this is also clear.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

The associates in the *aprakāṭa* Mathurā pastimes know that Kṛṣṇa is in Mathurā and not in Vraja, and similarly the associates in Vraja think that Kṛṣṇa is playing in Vraja and Kāṁsa is in Mathurā. The inhabitants of Dvārakā also think in this way. Kṛṣṇa simultaneously exists eternally in Vraja, Mathurā and Dvārakā with his associates in unlimited forms, with separate consciousness in each place, though He has only one body. This is the conclusion.

Thus, in the *prakāṣa* pastimes there is separation when Kṛṣṇa goes to Mathurā, whereas in the *aprakāṣa* pastimes the arrival of Akrura in Vraja, Kṛṣṇa going to Mathurā and the lamentation of the Vraja *gopīs* does not exist. That is expressed in verse 186. Separation accompanies the many *aprakāṣa* manifestations as previously discussed. [the four types of *vipralambha*]

...”Kṛṣṇa plays eternally in Vṛndāvana, in association with the cows, cowherds and *gopīs*.” In this manner, slight absence and separation within Vraja is not excluded. Thus, Kṛṣṇa has association of the cows, cowherds and *gopīs* though he goes from the village to the forest or from the forest to the village, **producing slight separation within Vṛndāvana.**

The separation experienced by devotees practicing *rāgānugā-bhakti* is due in part to their ever increasing realizations of Kṛṣṇa – His name, form, qualities and pastimes. As Kṛṣṇa reveals more of these details, they simultaneously feel the anguish of not fully realizing Kṛṣṇa, and that sense of separation becomes increasingly intense. This is part of Kṛṣṇa’s plan to increase the devotees’ love for Him, as He explains in the *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*:

But the reason I do not immediately reciprocate the affection of living beings even when they worship me, O *gopīs*, is that I want to intensify their loving devotion. They then become like a poor man who has gained some wealth and then lost it, and who thus becomes so anxious about it that he can think of nothing else. SB 10.32.20

*Līlā-smaraṇam* while chanting relieves some of the pain of such separation to the extent that one has realized the transcendental nature of the Holy Names and the *līlā*, because Kṛṣṇa is non different from His names. This happens increasingly in the stages of *ruci* and *āsakti*, and to a greater extent at *bhāva*, because one has already had direct glimpses (*sphūrti*) of Kṛṣṇa, so the separation is most intense due to heightened desires from direct contact.

In *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* the residents of Vaikuṅṭha instruct Gopa-kumāra, and Sanātana Gosvāmī elaborates:

Like the distressed crying of the *cātaka* birds on a cloudless day of the rainy season, or the lamenting of a flock of *cakravākī* birds when parted from their husbands at night, the *saṅkīrtana* of the Lord’s names arises when one is burdened by too much pain. BB, 2.3.167

Sanātana Gosvāmī’s commentary:

*Nāma-saṅkīrtana* in fact, appears only when *prema* has been enhanced in a special way. *Prema* enriched with transcendental hankering results in *saṅkīrtana*. To help us understand, the *Vaikuṅṭha-dūtas* mention, by way of analogy, the *cātaka* and *cakravākī* birds. The plaintive call of the *cātakas*, sounding like *priya priya* (“my dear one, my dear one!”), resounds on cloudless days of the rainy season. And the lament of the *cakravākīs* fills the sky when their husbands are absent at night.

In such a way, *nāma-saṅkīrtana* arises when one feels separation from the Lord in pure love of God. The true way of doing *bhagavān-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is to call out to one’s beloved Lord in agony, expressing one’s feelings in various sweet songs to attract Him. As the

philosophical maxim states, *siddhasya lakṣaṇam yat syāt sādhanam sādhakasya tat*: “The practitioner and the means of practice should be in accord with their goal.”

Separation increases the desire for union or contact with Kṛṣṇa, along with an intensification of love (higher levels of *prema*) and attachment. And it applies to Kṛṣṇa as well, because His love and attachment for Rādhā and the other *gopīs* also increases due to His separation from them.

There are two types of *sr̥ṅāra-rasa*: separation (*vipralambha*) and union (*sambhoga*).

The *bhāva* that strongly manifests in the couple when they cannot attain their desire of embracing and other actions either before or after meeting for the first time is called *vipralambha* (separation). It acts to nourish *sambhoga* (union).

*Sambhoga* is not strong without *vipralambha*. It increases in strength just as cloth increases in beauty by repeatedly dyeing it with red color.

There are four types of *vipralambha*: prior to ever meeting (*purva-rāga*), due to anger (*māna*), imagined separation (*prema-vaicittiyam*), and actual separation after meeting (*pravāsa*). UN, 15.1-4

The separation in Goloka is unique in the most astonishing ways, and though it might appear like suffering, it is not. From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentaries in *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*:

Hunger and an object to be eaten, together produce happiness. Without the object to be eaten, hunger produces suffering. Without hunger, the edible object does not produce happiness. In *rati* and other *bhāvas*, even in union, because the anxiety of separation cannot be completely removed, which prevents the feeling of having enough, the union produces happiness.

In separation, because the separation has continuous meeting through dreams, or in the mind because of His sudden appearance through remembrance (*sphūrṭi*), the separation becomes filled with happiness. In *adhirudha-bhāva* however, there is simultaneous incomparable happiness and suffering caused by union and separation. This produces an incomparable happiness. UN, 14.171 commentary

In the *prakāśa* of union one identifies with uniting with Kṛṣṇa. In the *prakāśa* of separation, one identifies with being separate from Kṛṣṇa. This is the consciousness of Rādhā. But when the *sthāyī-bhāva* called *mādana* manifests, at the very moment of experiencing union by kissing and embracing, there is an experience of separation. In one *prakāśa* there is an experience of two *prakāśas*. That is the unique feature of *mādana*.

“But how is it possible that at the time of union one would have intense thirst for Kṛṣṇa?” This is astonishing. At the time of union, there are thousands of types of longing. This means that there is a *sphūrṭi* of separation. By the *anurāga* described, one should not think there would be a confusing mixture. First one experiences separation. Then by repeated remembrance of the beloved, Kṛṣṇa appears as a *sphūrṭi*. On attaining that *sphūrṭi*, and on

embracing him, one does not make statements about longing. The experiences are spaced apart. UN, 14.2231 commentary

In his commentary on *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* (10.29.32), Viśvanātha Cakravartī reveals more details about the unique blissful nature of separation:

The pain experienced by the *premi-bhakta* during separation from Kṛṣṇa burns with more brilliance than millions of sun-rays. This all-illuminating sun of separation reveals all of Kṛṣṇa's beautiful transcendental qualities, including those related to Kṛṣṇa's opulence as well as those related to His sweetness. Thus the experience of devotion in separation does not cover any of Kṛṣṇa's qualities.

Devotion in union, on the other hand, is more pleasure-giving than millions of nectar-filled moonbeams, and reveals only those qualities of Kṛṣṇa which manifest His tasty sweetness (*mādhurya*). Since direct association with Kṛṣṇa is like the nectar rays of the moon, that intoxicating nectar covers Kṛṣṇa's opulence.

But in a case when even in union or meeting with Kṛṣṇa His opulences remain revealed, we must assume that the devotee's love is not yet mature. *Prema* shrinks or becomes less perfect during union or meeting if Kṛṣṇa's opulence (*aiśvarya*) is revealed. Although in this instance the *gopīs* are meeting with Kṛṣṇa, they are expecting separation, and thus they have a realization of Kṛṣṇa's *aiśvarya* caused by their perfectly pure love.

This is the mysterious working of *prema* itself. Even when love is imperfect it reveals Kṛṣṇa's glories, then what to speak of when it is completely perfect. Thus the magnitude of the *gopīs'* experience of Kṛṣṇa's greatness is the measure of the greatness of their love.

With all of the knowledge that has been presented thus far in this book, the notion of “service in separation in the mood of the *gopīs*” brings to mind several points for consideration. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mood of separation was in fact, Rādhā's separation, not the *gopīs*. The moods are similar, but the levels are different. That was His esoteric purpose – to directly experience Rādhā's higher levels of *prema* for Him.

His general external example was as a *rāgānugā-sādhaka* aspiring for *mādhurya-rasa*, which is the confidential *rasa* He specifically came to distribute to aspiring devotees. All of Rādhā's *sakhīs* experience Her moods of separation and union, so feeling Rādhā's *bhāvas* is also part of the shared experience that is part of *mādhurya-rasa* (*tat-tad-bhāvecchātma*).

If one's desired relationship with Kṛṣṇa is not as a *sakhī* or *priya-narma-sakhā*, then one should not superimpose a different mood on one's preferred mood, as that is never recommended. All of the *vraja-vāsīs* experience separation from Kṛṣṇa during the day as He goes about His various pastimes, and they all experienced extreme separation when Kṛṣṇa left for Mathurā. The principles are the same and the application is according to one's taste and preferences.

One may meditate on the manifest pastimes in Gokula, where separation is more prevalent for the *vraja-vāsīs*, and is a different form than in the unmanifest pastimes. Meditation on *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* does not include that type of separation, rather it involves the four types of separation



mentioned above, along with the corresponding four types of union that are nourished by, and complete them.

However, when one finally takes birth in the manifest *līlā* to begin the final stage in *vastu-siddhi*, one will certainly take part in those eternal earthly pastimes which includes Kṛṣṇa leaving Vraja for Mathurā and apparently never returning. Thus, as a kind of rite of passage, all devotees must go through that extended period of separation from Kṛṣṇa in those pastimes, until such time as they are transferred to the eternal unmanifest pastimes in Goloka Vraja. Thus, “service in separation” has many more layers for consideration than might be expected.

I’ll end this section with an excerpt from *Jaiva-dharma*, where Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains the basic format for an effective *bhajana* program:

Even before Vijaya Kumāra had heard the in-depth explanation of these three *ślokas* (BRS, 2.294-296) he asked, “What is the meaning of *kuryād vāsaṁ vraje sadā?*”

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, it means that the *sādhaka* should reside physically in *vraja-maṇḍala*, in other words, in the pastime places of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. If he cannot stay in Vraja physically, then he should do so mentally, because the result of residing in Vraja mentally is the same as residing there physically.

The *sādhaka* should follow in the footsteps of the particular *sakhī* whose loving *bhāvas* has attracted him. He should reside in Vraja with the *abhimāna* (self-conception) of being a *kuñja-sevikā* (a maid attendant in the *kuñja*) of that particular *sakhī*. He should constantly remember Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *bhāva* of that *sakhī*.

With this gross body the *sādhaka* should perform the *aṅgas* of *vaidhī-bhakti* such as *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*. With his subtle body he should constantly remember the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, and render his assigned *sevā* as a *siddha-vraja-gopī* according to the eleven *bhāvas* that he has attained.

Outwardly, the *sādhaka* must maintain his life following the prescribed rules and regulations, and internally he should cultivate the *bhāvas* that nourish his spiritual form (*siddha-deha*). One who follows this procedure correctly will naturally develop detachment from anything other than Vraja.

Vijaya: Please illustrate this *sevā* more clearly.

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: The real meaning of *vraja-vāsa* is to stay in a solitary place with *aprākṛta-bhāva* (a deeply spiritual mood). The *sādhaka* should render *sevā* according to the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* while regularly chanting a fixed number of *hari-nāma*. He should regulate all the activities for bodily maintenance so that they do not become unfavorable to his *bhajana*. In other words, life should be molded in such a way that activities of bodily maintenance become favorable to one’s *bhajana*.

Vijaya Kumāra contemplated this deeply, and said, “*Prabhu*, I have understood this fully, but how can the mind be composed?”

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: The mind automatically becomes composed as soon as one attains *rāgānugā-bhakti*. This is because the hankering of the mind for worldly enjoyment automatically ceases when it is enlivened with the inherent loving attachment of the self, and it runs towards Vraja. In other words, the mind chases after mundane enjoyment only because of its affinity for it, but when this affinity is directed towards Vraja, the mind becomes composed because of the absence of such attachment for worldliness.

Still, if any apprehension of obstacles remains, it is beneficial to adopt the gradual course that I mentioned previously. Then, when the mind becomes fully composed, the distractions of worldliness cannot cause any harm.

Vijaya: What is the meaning of gradual cultivation?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: One should maintain a fixed count of *hari-nāma*, and one should devoutly chant *śrī-hari-nāma* for a fixed period every day in solitude, absorbed in his particular *bhāva*, and keep his mind free from mundane thought. Slowly and gradually one should increase the time for this *sādhana*, and eventually the stage will come when the mind will always be saturated with [full spiritual consciousness and emotions], so that no mundane thoughts can prevail over it.

Vijaya: For how long must one follow this practice?

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: One should continue to follow this practice until he has reached a state of mind that is beyond any disturbance.

Vijaya: How can one perform *nāma-smaraṇa* with *bhāva*? Please elaborate on this point.

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī: First you should chant *nāma* in a mood of rejoicing. Then combine that joy with possessiveness (*mamatā*). After that, you should compound that *mamatā* with intimacy (*viśrambha*). When you do this, *śuddha-bhāva* will gradually arise. Then, [the stage of *āpana-daśā*] will appear.

Initially, during the time of *smaraṇa*, the *sādhaka* simply imposes *bhāva* on his practice. However, in the stage of [ *āpana-daśā* ], *śuddha-bhāva* manifests in the heart, and this is called *prema*. This indeed is the sequence for gradual development of *nisthā* within the heart of the transcendental servant, and this practice also includes the development of *nisthā* in the conception of the object of one's *sevā*. JD, Chapter 40, Pages 857-859

## The end of our journey

We have reached the end of our journey in this book. Hopefully, it will be the beginning of a new journey for many devotees. I sincerely hope that all devotees have benefited from this expedition and the unique *sādhū-saṅga* along the way. I encourage everyone to study these *ācāryas'* books for an expanded understanding of the many subjects that were covered here. There is no doubt that the information presented in this book will require time to be assimilated and processed. It is the most astonishing esoteric science and the highest confidential knowledge available to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.

I hope everyone feels closer to our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, having heard from them all at great length on the many different aspects of the book's main topics. We heard from Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Rāmānanda Rāya, Sanātana Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Śrīla Prabhupāda. We observed repeated consistency and concurrence on all aspects of the subject matters being analyzed. Their statements and conclusions were clear and unambiguous. We would be remiss if we disregard the shelter of their causeless mercy.

I hope that the included diagrams have helped visualize the complex relationships between the many elements that comprise the science of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. All of these parts fit perfectly together in the vast tapestry that this knowledge reveals. All Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas have a place in that big picture, and it is a moving point along the path of their own unique journey to the goal.

It is well known that Rūpa Gosvāmī desired to fulfill Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's innermost wish to spread the confidential truths of *mādhurya-rasa*, through his books, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* and others. Not only did Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's associates reveal the details of *mādhurya-rasa*, through them, He also revealed the processes to attain *mādhurya-rasa*, and that knowledge given by the *ācāryas* has been presented in this book.

*anarpita-carim cirat karunayavatirnah kalau  
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasah sva-bhakti-śrīyam  
harih purata-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandipitah  
sada hrdaya-kandare sphuratu vah saci-nandanah*

May that Lord who is known as the son of Śrīmatī Sacīdevī be transcendently situated in the innermost chambers of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has appeared in the Age of Kali, by His causeless mercy, to bestow what no incarnation ever offered before: the most sublime and radiant [*rasa*] of devotional service, the [*rasa*] of conjugal love (*ujjvala-rasa*). VM, 1.2, CC, 1.1.4

I sincerely pray that Śrīla Prabhupāda and Rūpa Gosvāmī will accept this book as my humble contribution to their missions. I pray that the other *ācāryas* will be pleased with my presentation of their teachings. I pray that this book will be received by my Godsisters and Godbrothers as my offering of Vaiṣṇava *sevā* to them. I pray that the information in this book causes an explosion of transcendental desires in the hearts of all Vaiṣṇavas who read it.

## Appendix

### Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī's biography

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī is one of the main characters in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Jaiva-dharma*, and throughout the last half of that book, he teaches Vijaya Kumāra and his uncle about *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana*. Here I would like to present a short biography of Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī for the benefit of our readers.

I reviewed a number of biographies of Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī available online and found some of them to contain blatant inaccuracies, such as saying that Gopāla Guru was an incarnation of Tuṅgavidyā *sakhī*, one of Rādhā's *aṣṭa-sakhīs*. In fact, according to Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī's, *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*, it is Gopāla Guru's spiritual master, Vakreśvara Paṇḍit, who is Tuṅgavidyā. According to *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā*, Prabhodananda Sarasvati is also Tuṅgavidyā. Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī was Gopāla Guru's main disciple.

Śrī Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī was also known as Makaradhvāja Paṇḍita, although Mahāprabhu was in the habit of addressing him as Gopāla. He was from Utkala, Orissa, and of Brāhmin birth. His father was called Murārī Paṇḍita. Among the five chief disciples of Śrī Vakreśvara Paṇḍita, Gopāla Guru was the special object of Mahāprabhu's mercy. From an early age, Gopāla Guru was in the care of his *guru*.

One day Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu went outside the village to tend to his bodily needs. Gopāla was standing some distance away with a waterpot in his hand ready to serve the Lord. He noticed that the Holy Name, which always blissfully danced on His tongue, was not to be heard. Wondering how this could be, he then saw that the Lord was holding his tongue with his hand.

After a short while, Gopāla, being full of curiosity, inquired from the Lord, "Prabhu! Why are you holding your tongue like that?" Mahāprabhu answered, "The words Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa always dance on my tongue, and even when I'm unclean they don't stop. One is forbidden to chant the *Kṛṣṇa-nāma mahā-mantra* when he is unclean. Transgressing that injunction is an offense. For this reason, I hold my tongue to keep it still."

Gopāla replied, "Prabhu! Elegant words don't adorn my little mouth, but still, in order to understand, I am asking. Your beautiful body doesn't have a trace of uncleanliness. It is *sac-cid-ānanda-māyā* and always pure. Your 'going to the bathroom' is an illusion. That's just your pretending to be human. You are independent, but if an ordinary *jīva* should die while evacuating, without chanting the Holy Name, how will he attain the transcendental state?"

Hearing these profound words from the boy, the Lord replied, "Gopāla, you have spoken correctly. In chanting the Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāma there is no consideration of cleanliness or uncleanliness. Chanting is always auspicious for the *jīva*. You have caused me to remember the highest injunction. From today, you shall bear the title *guru*." Mahāprabhu told the devotees this story, and the news quickly spread everywhere. Soon all the Vaiṣṇavas began to call Gopāla "Śrī Gopāla Guru."

After the disappearance of Lord Caitanya, Vakreśvara Paṇḍita received the charge of the *sevā* of *Gambhira* in Kāśī Miśra’s house, where the Lord used to stay during his visits to Purī. Gopāla Guru, who was a disciple of Vakreśvara, succeeded him as the *sevaita* of the Rādhā-Kānta temple at *Gambhira*. During the time of Gopāla Guru the temple of Rādhā-Kānta was renovated, and he installed Deities of Rādhā and Lalitā on each side of Rādhā-Kānta as well as Deities of Śrī Śrī Nītai Gauracandra, in very beautiful dancing postures.

When Gopāla Guru became old, he wanted to arrange for someone to continue the worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kānta. To obtain a suitable *sevaka*, he offered a mental prayer to the lotus feet of Śrīmān Mahāprabhu. One night, the Lord appeared to Gopāla Guru and said, “Gopāla! The *sevaka* you seek will be the first person you see tomorrow morning. Accept him without hesitation. Like you, he will be learned in all the transcendental *śāstras*. He will preserve well the worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kānta and reveal My glories to the whole world.”

Hearing this order from Mahāprabhu in his dream, Gopāla Guru became ecstatic. The next morning, after his morning duties, he went to his doorway. The first person he saw was a very peaceful young *brāhmaṇa* who had been standing there waiting to see him. When the youth approached, he offered *dandavats* to Gopāla Guru’s lotus feet. The Gosvāmī remembered his dream and blissfully offered the young man his blessings. Seeing his peaceful nature and absorption in Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, Gopāla Guru gave him *mantra-dīkṣā*, and named him Śrī Dhyānacandra.

After receiving initiation, Dhyānacandra served his *guru* with great devotion. Gopāla Guru engaged him in caring for Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kānta. After a short while in *govinda-sevā*, he received the dress of a Vaiṣṇava ascetic from his *guru*, and was then ordered to visit Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhama.

Gopāla Guru compiled a *Smarāṇa Paddhati*, which is composed of twenty-four chapters. His main disciple was Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī, who was a very influential teacher. Elaborating upon Gopāla Guru’s *Paddhati*, he wrote another *Paddhati* which included an appendix on the sequence of eightfold daily service in meditation.

*Bhakti Ratnākara* (8.382-392) narrates Narottama’s meeting with Gopāla Guru as follows:

“Narottama went to Kāśī Miśra’s house. There he met Śrī Gopāla Guru. With great affection he gently spoke these sweet words: “Only by the Lord’s wish do I somehow remain alive. Gazing at this holy place, I will soon bid farewell to this life. O Narottama, look, in this very secluded place Lord Caitanya all alone, would sit on a straw *āsana*. In this place Lord Mahāprabhu would lie down. Śrī Govinda would massage His feet. Who has the power to understand Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Prabhu’s pastimes. He manifested ecstatic spiritual love even Brahmā and the demigods cannot attain.”

Seeing Lord Caitanya’s bed and *āsana*, Narottama rolled on the ground. Again and again he wept. His heart wild with spiritual love, Śrī Gopāla Guru hugged Narottama, and he wept loudly. After many moments Gopāla Guru became peaceful. He consoled Narottama and made him peaceful also. Gopāla Guru showed Narottama all the different places where Lord Caitanya was plunged in the ecstasy of spiritual love. Gopāla Guru spoke of Vakreśvara Paṇḍita’s glorious

activities. He made Narottama offer respectful obeisances at the lotus feet of the Deity Śrī Rādhā-Kānta.”

After Gopāla Guru’s disappearance, as soon as his transcendental body was placed in its *samādhi* at Svargadvar, the king’s men declared that because the servitorship of Rādhā-Kānta Mandira within Kāśī Mīśra Bhavan had been bestowed upon Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī without their permission, they were going to seize the temple, which they did. Thus, Dhyānacandra was plunged into an ocean of grief, being doubly distressed. His *guru* had just left and he was feeling great separation from him. Now on the top that the king’s men had barred him from worshiping Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kānta, the very service that had been bestowed upon him by his *guru*.

After Ratha Yatra, however, someone went on a pilgrimage to *Vṛndāvana* where they saw Gopāla Guru sitting underneath a *Pankura* tree near *Vamsivat*. When Dhyānacandra received this information he rushed to *Vṛndāvana* where he in fact found his Guru Mahārāja. He begged and begged his *guru* to return to Purī, but Gopāla Guru replied, “I already left my body there. Now I am in *Vṛndāvana* so why should I go back there? If you are feeling separation from me then you can have a Deity made of me from a neem tree in the garden of Siddha Bakula. I will be personally present in that *murti* and will also straighten out the servants of the king.” In this way all of Dhyānacandra’s problems were solved by his *guru* in the form of this *murti*.

The *murti* of Gopāla Guru in Purī is still being worshipped at Rādhā-Kānta Mandir and another branch of Rādhā-Kānta temple with a *samādhi mandir* and *murti* of Gopāla Guru was founded near Vamsivata in *Vṛndāvana*. There are also branches of Rādhā-Kānta Mandira founded by some followers of Gopāla Guru at: Vidhuban, *Vṛndāvana*; Kangali Mahāprabhu Math, *Vṛndāvana*; Arunānanda Kuñja, Rādhā-kuṇḍa; Kiśori-Kuṇḍa, Yāvat; Gambhirar Matha, Koladwipa; Mādhavī Devī’s Gopinātha Mandir, Bentpur.

Gopāla Guru disappeared from this world on the ninth day of the bright fortnight of *Kartika*.

### **Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī’s *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati***

As mentioned above and elsewhere in this book, Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī was the main disciple of Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī. He wrote, *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*, which is a manual (*paddhati*) to teach the principles of *rāgānugā-bhajana*, as it was taught directly to Vakreśvara Pandit (Tuṅgavidyā) by Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī (Lalitā), Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s most confidential associate.

Thus, in this book we can find some of the most confidential teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu on *rāgānugā-bhajana*, delivered through Svarūpa Dāmodara, who also was entrusted by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach this knowledge to Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī (Rati-mañjarī). There are no higher authorities than these for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. The significance of this book cannot be overstated, as confirmed by the teachings of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in *Jaiva-dharma*.

Gopāla Guru also wrote a *paddhati*, but it is not readily available. According to most sources, these two books are supposedly the same, except that Dhyānacandra's *paddhati* also includes an additional section at the end regarding meditating on the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā – Śrī Śrī Rādhā-kṛṣṇāṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇa-krama-paddhati*. That *paddhati* is based on a conversation from the *Sanat-kumāra Saṁhitā* between Vṛndā devī and Nārada Muni, who asked her about these pastimes. In *Jaiva-dharma*, Vijaya Kumāra obtained a copy of Dhyānacandra's *paddhati*.

Many Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas have never heard of *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*. At least they “think” they haven't. In fact, many of the well know prayers and *mantras* chanted daily by all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas come from this book. They were not necessarily composed specifically for this book, but were compiled therein as part of the collection of verses suitable for *rāgānugā-bhajana* for all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, and they have been used to this day. Here are a few of the more well known ones that were included in the first ISKCON Songbook:

*ajñāna-timirāndhasya  
jñānāñjana-śalākayā  
cakṣur unmlitaṁ yena  
tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

I offer my respectful obeisance unto Śrī Guru. My eyes were blinded by the darkness of ignorance, and he has opened them with the torchlight of knowledge.

*tapta-kāñcana-gaurāṅgi  
rādhe vrndāvaneśvari  
vṛṣabhānu-sute devī  
praṇamāmi hari-priye*

I offer my humble obeisance unto Śrī Rādhā, whose bodily complexion is like molten gold, and who is the Queen of Vṛndāvana. She is the daughter of King Vṛṣabhānu and is very dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

*vāñchā-kalpa-tarubhyaś ca  
kṛpā-sindhubhya eva ca  
patitānām pāvanebhyo  
vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Lord. They are just like desire trees who can fulfill everyone's dreams, and they are full of compassion for the fallen conditioned souls.

Besides these prayers there are many more prayers and meditations (*dhyāna*). There are also the Guru *mantra*, Gaura *mantra*, Gopāla *mantra* and their respective *gāyatrīs*, including *kāma-gāyatrī*, Rādhā's *mantra* and *gāyatrī*, as well as the *mantras* and *gāyatrīs* for all of the *Pañca-tattva*, *aṣṭa-sakhīs*, and prominent *mañjarīs*. All Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas who have received *dīkṣā*,

chant many of these *mantras* and *gāyatrīs* daily. This book is where they were originally compiled.

As stated in Chapter 5, this is the first known text with details about *ekadāśa-bhāva*, along with specific instructions for meditations in one's *siddha-deha*. There are descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's and Rādhā's qualities, Rādhā's principal *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs*. This book is overflowing with inspirational information and instructions for those qualified to engage in *rāgānugā-bhajana*. All such qualified devotees should study this book carefully for valuable insights.

As we have learned, *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhajana* is customized and personalized for each devotee, so this manual is not a hard core instruction manual where every single item must be followed to obtain the desired goal. This is not *vaidhī-bhakti* with its rules and regulations. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Bhajana-rahasya* is a perfect example of personalized *bhajana*. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda knew and studied *Gaura Govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*, yet still he developed his own unique methods that were personally inspirational to him. That is the example to be followed.



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I have unlimited gratitude for the work of all the translators listed here. Without their efforts, this book would not have been possible. I am eternally indebted – *dandavats* to all of them.

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*Mādhurya-kadambinī* – Translator unknown <sup>12</sup>  
*Saṅkalpa-kalpadrumaḥ* – Śrīla B.V. Nārāyana Mahārāja, Gauḍīya Vedānta Publications  
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*Harināma-cintāmaṇi* – Jagadānanda Dāsa, Ph.D., Sanskrit <sup>13</sup>  
*Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta* – Bhānu Svāmī, Bṛhat Mṛdaṅga Press  
*Bhajana-rahasya* – Translator unknown  
*Prema-bhakti-candrikā* – Bhūmipati Dāsa, Touchstone Media  
*Hindu Encounter With Modernity* – Shukavak N. Dāsa, Ph.D., Sanskrit Religions Institute

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<sup>12</sup> Translators Unknown: There are a number of translations available for these books and the ones I used were the best of those, but the translator's name was not given in the documents. I searched extensively, but was unsuccessful. My apologies to them.

<sup>13</sup> This translation of Chapter 15 was originally a comparison of four translations by my Godbrothers, along with Jagadānanda's translation. After carefully studying all five translations I decided to use Jagadānanda's version, since it properly maintained the separation between the verses and Bhaktivinoda's notes, and was fully consistent with what Bhaktivinoda wrote in *Jaiva-dharma*.