

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta and Rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti

There is a criticism of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī in certain Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava circles, concerning his approach to *sādhana*. In short, the claim is that by overemphasizing *vaidhī bhakti* he did not faithfully pass down the traditional teachings on the practice of *rāgānuga-bhakti*. This is not a minor criticism. After all, *rāgānuga-bhakti* is precisely what Śrī Caitanya came to give. To fairly judge Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's approach to *rāgānuga-bhakti* I suggest that we must start by examining what Śrī Caitanya's immediate successors taught, especially Śrī Rūpa, as they were the ones entrusted to codify and establish His teachings. The intention of this paper is to explore such teachings, in order to demonstrate that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's approach to *rāgānuga-bhakti*—his emphasis on *kīrtana* and his strong cautions regarding *smarana*—is firmly within the bounds of Gauḍīya tradition. Moreover, I will suggest that it is especially warranted given the historical circumstances in which he developed his mission.

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's main description of *rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti* is found in the second wave of the first division of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. All Gauḍīya developments in the practice of *rāgānuga-sādhana* stem from this account. Śrī Rūpa naturally begins his description with the qualification to adopt the practice:

The basic prerequisite for practicing *rāgānuga-bhakti* is simply a genuine longing (*lobha*) for a mood of devotion similar to that of one of the eternal residents of Vraja.” (*B.r.s.* 1.2.291)¹

He next describes the symptoms of such *lobha*:

The appearance of greed (*lobha*) is shown when one's impetus to execute devotional service no longer rests on scriptural rule and logic, but is reliant solely on one's natural attraction for serving Kṛṣṇa. (*B.r.s.* 1.2.292)

Such yearning to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a manner akin to a specific devotee in Vraja arises in the heart by faithfully hearing scriptures such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* where such perfect devotees are described.² This also implies associating with qualified Vaiṣṇavas who know scripture and can instill faith.

Immediately following his discussion of eligibility, Śrī Rūpa, in three verses, gives his seminal description of how to practice *rāgānuga-bhakti*. In the first of these verses he explains the basis of *rāgānuga-sādhana*:

One should constantly hear **about** and remember Vraja-Kṛṣṇa **and one of His** dear associates whose devotion one genuinely craves. This practice should be done while living in Vraja. (*B.r.s.* 1.2.294)

Living in Vraja also implies residing there within the mind if one is not able to physically live there.³

He elaborates in the second verse what following a resident of Vṛndāvana entails:

One should emulate the activities of an eternal resident of Vṛndāvana (*vraja-lokānūsarataḥ*) both externally in one's physical body (*sādhaka-rūpa*) and internally in one's perfected body (*siddha-rūpa*) coveting that specific eternal associate's particular mood of devotion (*tad-bhāva-lipsunā*). (B.r.s. 1.2.295)

For example, if one develops a strong desire (*lobha*) for *mañjarī-bhāva*, the mood and activities of the younger *gopīs* such as Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī, one should first, in his or her present body (*sādhaka-rūpa*), follow in the footsteps of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. In other words, one should chant, hear, and perform other devotional services while emulating his life as a resident of Vṛndāvana at the time of Śrī Caitanya.

The *rāgānuga-sādhaka* legitimately coveting the devotion of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī also serves internally in a spiritual body (*siddha-rūpa*), which is necessary for meditation on one's personal *sevā* to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī's footsteps (and devotional attitude).

It should be noted that *siddha-rūpa* is not exactly referring to one's eternal spiritual body (*siddha-deha*), but to a body developed by internal meditation under the direction of the spiritual master based on one's eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. If the *siddha-rūpa* was the fully manifested spiritual body, or the goal of practice, then what would be the need to practice in the first place?

Finally, the third verse instructs the *rāgānuga-sādhaka* to not reject *vaidhī bhakti*, but to accept with discrimination those practices that nourish one's maturing eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. For example, one who is aspiring to serve Kṛṣṇa in the mood of Mother Yaśodā will not give up Deity worship, but will worship the form of Kṛṣṇa as a small child (Bāla-Kṛṣṇa) with maternal affection. Similarly, one aspiring for the mood of the *gopīs* will continue chanting and hearing about Kṛṣṇa, but will mostly select songs and readings about the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.⁴

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī outlined the basic principles of *rāgānuga-bhakti*, as seen above. The details of the practice developed in various ways based on his outline. For example, in perhaps one of the most popular practices of *rāgānuga-sādhana* today, the guru reveals to the spiritual aspirant at the time of initiation (or soon thereafter) the eleven characteristics (*ekādaśa-bhāva*) of one's spiritual identity, including such details as one's name, parents, dress, service, and so on.

Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura himself was initiated into this process and discusses its history in chapter thirty-nine of his novel *Jaiva Dharma*. He explains that Śrī Caitanya initially entrusted the teaching of worship in *rāga-mārga* (*rasamaya-upāsana*) to Svarūpa Dāmodara. Svarūpa Dāmodara in turn taught the external path, one of the parts of this worship,⁵ to Vakreśvara Gosvāmī who passed it on to Gopāla Guru, whose disciple, Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī, finally wrote the basic step-by-step manual of this lineage. This is where the adoption of *ekādaśa-bhāva* is first formally described as a recommended practice.

As the basic system outlined in Dhyānachandra's *paddhati*, which includes initiation into *ekādaśa-bhāva*, is still quite prominent among the various practitioners of *rāgānuga-bhakti*, especially those connected with Rādhā-kuṇḍa, the followers of this process often profess to be "the traditionalists" of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. This method of worship based on initiation into *ekādaśa-bhāva*, however, though rooted in the teachings of the six Gosvāmīs, is a practice developed in depth after them. Nowhere in their books is it explicitly described.⁶

Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, wary of the effects of prematurely dwelling on the Lord's intimate pastimes, especially in more modern times where people are generally less pious, often spoke strongly against the premature introduction of *ekādaśa-bhāva*, such as giving it indiscriminately at the beginning of a person's spiritual life. After all, his father, Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, dedicated himself to restoring the dignity of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, which had been cheapened in the public eye by various deviant Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sects. Among the various deviations, it was not uncommon even to find the spiritual erotic in Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-*līlā* misinterpreted as a license for mundane sex.

Besides its gross misuse, Bhaktisiddhānta saw other reasons to be cautious in approaching *rāgānuga-sādhana* prematurely. To meditate on one's *siddha-rūpa* in relation to Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is the devotional item of concentrated remembrance called *smaraṇa*.⁷ *Smaraṇa* entails controlling the mind by withdrawing the external senses from all engagement during one's practice. If one adopts this process before the heart is purified, his or her desires will inevitably force the mind outward to the senses in the course of meditation. As the meditator's senses have already been withdrawn from devotional activity—unlike during *kīrtana*, for example, where all the senses are engaged in devotional activity—the premature practitioner of *smaraṇa* has no recourse but to dwell on the mundane. Therefore, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, the foremost devotional scholar in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, in his main treatise on *bhakti* cautions:

A pure heart is required, however, for remembrance (*smaraṇa*). Therefore, it is not as effective as *kīrtana*. (*Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā, Anuccheda 276*)⁸

And what is that purification? One must first cleanse the heart by devotional practices that engage the senses. He thus also writes in the same text:

“If one's heart has become pure by surrender, *sādhu-saṅga*, and hearing and singing the names, forms, attributes and pastimes of the Lord, one can perform *smaraṇa*, or remembrance of the Lord” (*Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā, Anuccheda 274*).⁹

The practice of *rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti*, as described by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī (*B.r.s.* 1.2.295), which entails meditation on one's *siddha-rūpa*, is thus an advanced process and not recommended until one is qualified.¹⁰

Interestingly, although there is a high qualification for *smaraṇa*, and *smaraṇa* is the basis of *rāgānuga-bhakti*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī never mentions mental purity as a pre-requisite for *rāgānuga-bhakti*.¹¹ He simply describes the qualification as a genuine longing (*lobha*) for service in Vṛndāvana. There is no contradiction, however. Although obtaining a genuine eagerness to achieve the service of an eternal resident of Vṛndāvana is not exclusively dependent on purity, once genuine *lobha* (impelling taste) awakens by the mercy of a Vaiṣṇava, the heart immediately becomes cleansed and one becomes qualified for *rāgānuga-sādhana* based on *smaraṇa*. In *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā* Śrī Jīva establishes this point by reference to the *Bhāgavatam*:

When this taste increases in the heart of a faithful person, it brings detachment from all other objects. Such a person becomes absorbed in the bliss of remembering the Lord's feet, and all his miseries are quickly dispelled. (*S.B.* 3.5.13)¹²

On the basis that real *lobha* awakens detachment, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was very critical of those who claimed to practice *rāgānuga-bhakti*, but whose habits were suspect:

The disciple whose bad habits (*anarthas*) are not removed is never said to have achieved deep devotional attachment. The science of intimate devotional mellows (*rasa-tattva*) is never taught to the disciple who is still contaminated by material impediments. (*Prākṛta-rasa-sata-dūṣiṇī*)

There is no strong evidence that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta ever directly revealed even to his mature disciples their *siddha-svarūpa*.¹³ At least, he never made it known. He also discouraged even the reading of standard Gosvāmī books that intimately described the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, at least to the general mass of devotees:

"Our master did not allow us to read the books where the highest *līlās* are described. *Govinda-līlāmṛta*, *Stava-kusumāñjali*,¹⁴ *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*. He did not allow us to study

and to discuss them. Rather, he would be very much disturbed if he heard that someone was interfering with the higher *līlās* in those books. He did not like it. There are three chapters of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that we were generally not allowed to discuss fully, including the conversations with Rāmānanda Rāya. Where the *līlā* portion of Rādhā-Govinda is mentioned, we were not to delve. Of course when *parāyaṇa* (consecutive chanting of the whole book) was taking place, we were to go on reading those sections, but without giving any particular attention to the *līlā* of the highest order of *rāga*. That was barred: ‘Don’t try to come into details there. That will come automatically when it is time. Do not make it a public discussion. Do not place it in the public eye.’ “(Śrīla BR Śrīdhara Mahārāja, *Following the Angels*, p.91)

There is thus no record or testimony of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta giving extensive personal instructions on *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇa*, except perhaps on one occasion.¹⁵ How then do the followers in his line practice *rāgānuga-bhakti*?

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta surely instructed his disciples to be cautious about the premature practice of *rāgānuga-bhakti*. In that sense, however, his methodology follows the six Gosvāmīs, who spoke of a cautious step by step approach to devotional service. Śrī Jīva writes:

Yet in order for purification of the heart to take place, it is necessary to begin with hearing the name. When the heart is purified, one can hear about the Lord’s form, and by doing so the heart becomes fit for revelation of the Lord’s form. When the Lord’s name, form and qualities have fully manifested along with His associates, the pastimes of the Lord unfold properly. It is with this intention that hearing the topics in a specific order was originally stated. The same conclusions apply in regard to singing (*kīrtana*) and remembering (*smaraṇa*) the names, forms, virtues and pastimes of the Lord. (*Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā*, Anuccheda 256)

In other words, although distrustful of imitative methods of advanced meditation, Bhaktisiddhānta wasn’t necessarily denying his followers access by stressing a more cautious approach. He was just insisting on an honest approach that matched the level of one’s meditation with the level of one’s purity. In his mission statement (*Upadeśāvali*) he made clear to his followers the practice and goal of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism:

Proper *śravaṇa*, hearing, is accomplished through the medium of *kīrtana*, and this will give one the good opportunity to practice *smaraṇa*, remembrance. Then internal experience of rendering direct service to the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in each of the eight parts of the day, becomes possible. (*Upadeśāvali*, 20)¹⁶

Although *rāgānuga-bhakti* primarily means the practice of remembering the residents of Vṛndāvana, and various detailed methodologies have been developed over the years based on that principle, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s promotion of the predominance of *nāma-kīrtana* over other practices in achieving that remembrance is well documented within the tradition.

The most authoritative lesson for the Gauḍīyas about the primacy of the holy name in *rāgānuga-sādhana* is the life of Śrī Caitanya Himself. One especially telling example in this regard is found in the direct instructions He received in a dialogue with His spiritual master. The significance of that discussion cannot be underestimated as it is directly revealing the truths descending in Śrī Caitanya’s lineage. A brief summary of the philosophical thread of this conversation establishes the unquestioned potency of the holy name to independently grant the highest perfection.

First His spiritual master promises Him perfection by *nāma-kīrtana*: “Indeed, simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra one will be able to see the lotus feet of the Lord” (*C.c. Ādi 1.7.73*).¹⁷ After that he

orders Him to keep a verse on his tongue that reveals *nāma-kīrtana* as the exclusive method to grant that perfection:

In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way. (C.c. Ādi 1.7.76)

He then validates the legitimacy of Śrī Caitanya's overwhelming ecstasy in chanting the holy name as indicative of the highest perfection: "It is the very nature of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra to immediately invoke devotional ecstasy for Kṛṣṇa" (C.c. Ādi 1.7.83). Finally he discloses a verse (Ś.B. 11.2.40) that he deems "the essence of the *Bhāgavatam*":

When a person is actually advanced and takes pleasure in chanting the holy name of the Lord, who is very dear to him, he is agitated and loudly chants the holy name. He also laughs, cries, becomes agitated and chants just like a madman, not caring for outsiders. (C.c. Ādi 1.7.94)

This last statement by Śrī Caitanya's preceptor is particularly significant, especially considering the stature of the *Bhāgavatam* in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology. The various symptoms of devotional ecstasy described above indicate an awakening of one's eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, the fruit of *rāgānuga-bhakti*. By regarding *nāma-kīrtana* as the cause, Śrī Caitanya's spiritual master not only establishes *nāma-kīrtana* as the prime method to achieve perfection, but places other methodologies for perfection, such as remembrance, in a secondary or supportive role. It is therefore not surprising that in *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā* Śrī Jīva refers to the same verse (Ś.B. 11.2.40) at the beginning of his analysis of *kīrtana* to show that the chief result of *nāma-kīrtana* is *prema*.¹⁸

Indeed, all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* concur that offenseless chanting of *nāma-kīrtana* is the best method of perfection and the essential teaching of the *Bhāgavatam*. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, for example, is considered one of the most prominent *ācāryas* after Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura in solidifying the tradition's development and focus on *rāgānuga-bhakti*. He also, however, unequivocally promotes *nāma-kīrtana* as the preeminent method of perfection. In this regard, his commentary on the following prominent instructions by Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī to Mahārāja Parīkṣit are quite revealing:

O King, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all, including those who are free from all material desires, those who are desirous of all material enjoyment, and also those who are self-satisfied by dint of transcendental knowledge. (Ś.B. 2.1.11)

His commentary states:

[...] Among all forms of *bhakti*, *śravaṇa* (hearing), *smaraṇa* (remembering) and *kīrtana* (chanting), *kīrtana* is the main one. Again, among the various forms of *kīrtana* (focusing on the names, the forms, the qualities, and the acts), *kīrtana* of the names is the best. Moreover, in the *kīrtana* of the names, *kīrtana* of the names that fit one's *bhakti* is considered the best of all.¹⁹

Viśvanātha's comments appropriately reflect the significance of Śukadeva Gosvāmī's instruction about *kīrtana*, especially if one considers that this is his first response to the seminal inquiry of the *Bhāgavatam*: "What is the duty of a man about to die and what should he not do?". In other words, the fact that *nāma-kīrtana* is the answer to this determining question reaffirms that the *Bhāgavatam*, and thus *rāgānuga-bhakti*, is primarily about *nāma-kīrtana*, the main point of Viśvanātha's commentary.

The six Gosvāmīs are the chief followers of Śrī Caitanya. Of them, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī is their leader. His *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* holds a special place of importance in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism as the first text of

the tradition that presents a comprehensive overview of Śrī Caitanya's teachings. It is thus important, especially in terms of the present discussion, to acknowledge that the theme of the *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* is the attainment of Goloka Vṛndāvana (the fruit of *rāga-mārga*) by the process of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. The whole book is filled with verses and sections of verses that highlight the superiority of *nāma-saṅkīrtana* over other devotional practices. For example:

Kṛṣṇa! Slipping out of the threads of hearing (*śravaṇa*), you are again caught by the ropes of meditation (*dhyāna*). Escaping from those, too, you are captured by the chains of *saṅkīrtana* of your Name.²⁰

The *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* not only recommends *nāma-kīrtana* as the most important devotional practice in general, but the foundation of *rāgānuga-sādhana* as well. It is thus noteworthy that in the final instructions of Mahārāja Parīkṣit to his mother, Uttarā, he recommends that she follow in the footsteps of the *gopīs* by dedicating herself to *nāma-saṅkīrtana*:

Dear mother, you as well should always worship this young cowherd boy. He is the ocean that yields the nectar of the *rāsa* dance, in which divine *gopīs* fully surround Him, entranced by pure love. You should cherish the desire to be a servant of these *gopīs*, you should constantly worship Him in pure love as they did, and you should dedicate yourself to the *saṅkīrtana* of His names. (B.b. 1.7.154-155)²¹

Of course, who would deny *nāma-kīrtana* as the foundation of practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the basis of *rāgānuga-bhakti*, the essence of which is meditation on Kṛṣṇa? That's exactly the point: by stressing *nāma-kīrtana* as the best means to attain the platform of concentrated meditation, and the best way to meditate on Kṛṣṇa in general, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was simply following the basic instructions on worship outlined by the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

Although *nāma-kīrtana* is the basis of developing *prema-bhakti*, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta certainly built his mission based on the practice of *nāma-kīrtana*, one more challenge to his fidelity to the tradition's practice of *rāgānuga-bhakti* can be raised. Consummate love manifests by exchanging love in the mood of a specific relationship. For example, to attain perfect friendship requires first sharing love in a mood of friendship. It is thus not *nāma-kīrtana* alone that brings one to pure love of Kṛṣṇa, but *nāma-kīrtana* chanted with intense devotion, a level of devotion requiring awareness of one's specific relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Jīva writes:

Yet, even a person who is so resolved needs to chant specific names of the Lord that nourish his or her particular devotional mood. This is expressed in the second of these two verses.²² By singing the names of the Lord that are dear to him, he or she develops deep love for the Lord. Only in this way does the heart melt, giving rise to a variety of different corresponding emotions, which are exhibited externally in the form of laughter, tears and so on. (*Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā*, Anuccheda 263)

Therefore, for one's chanting to arouse *prema-bhakti*, one needs to practice in cognizance of one's eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, as Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī taught.

The question thus still remains: how do the followers of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta get their *siddha-rūpa* if apparently it was not directly given by him or any of his successors? And without such mercy do they have the full tools to enter eternal Vraja, despite being gifted with the holy name? After all, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself unequivocally speaks of the limited destination of the practitioner of *vaidhī bhakti*, spiritual practice inspired only by obligation and duty:

Everywhere in the world people worship Me according to scriptural injunctions. But simply by following such regulative principles one cannot attain the loving sentiments of the devotees in Vrajabhūmi. (Cc. *Adi* 3.16)

It is true that for *nāma-kīrtana* to blossom into *prema-bhakti*, one has to chant with mature *sambandha-jñāna*, knowledge of one's specific relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Nonetheless, that hardly poses a challenge to what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta taught, even if for argument's sake it could be proved that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta never revealed to any of his disciples their *siddha-rūpa*. Offenseless chanting of the holy name brings one to an understanding of one's eternal relationship with God at which point one's chanting flowers into *prema-bhakti* and bestows residence in Goloka. How else can one understand Śrī Caitanya's unequivocal statement?

Of the nine processes of devotional service, the most important is to always chant the holy name of the Lord. If one does so, avoiding the ten kinds of offenses, one very easily obtains the most valuable love of Godhead. (*C.c. Antya* 4.71)

Or the statement by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja:

The Absolute Truth is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and loving devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa exhibited in pure love is achieved through congregational chanting of the holy name, which is the essence of all bliss. (*C.c. Ādi* 1.96)

According to Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī, the practices of devotion can independently awaken one's eternal relationship with the Lord, as implied by Śrī Uddhava in a discussion with Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

You appear in two features—externally as the *ācārya* and internally as the Supersoul—to deliver the embodied living being by directing him how to come to You. (*Ś.B.* 11.29.6)

Viśvanātha comments:

Thus, according to the words of Śrīla Uddhava Mahāśaya, some receive instructions from the mouth of Śrīla Gurudeva, some attain all knowledge through hearing from the mouth of an *anurāgi-bhakta* who is conversant with the feelings to be followed, and in some, whose consciousness has become purified through the practice of devotion, the knowledge manifests by itself. (*Rāga-Vartma-Candrikā*, text 1.9)²³
In other words, this key verse in Viśvanātha's seminal treatise on *rāga-mārga* affirms three ways in which one can realize one's eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa:

- 1) Revealed by the initiating spiritual master (externally)
- 2) Revealed by another advanced Vaiṣṇava (externally)
- 3) Revealed by the Lord in the heart in response to one's sincere devotional practices (internally)

Even if Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta did not directly give his disciples their *siddha-rūpa*—and the best one can say is that it is not known for sure if he ever did—on the basis of *śāstra* (above) it can still be argued that by giving his disciples the standard practices of devotion based on *nāma-kīrtana* he was leading them to the internal manifestation of their *siddha-rūpa*. In this way he would also be avoiding the risk of artificially putting an advanced meditation in the hands of the unqualified. And he would not be alone in this choice, both within and beyond the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava world. The Vallabhas and Nimbārkas, the only other two Vaiṣṇava lines offering *rāga-mārga*, also prescribe the path of internal revelation by the practice of devotional service.

In one sense there is no difference in the path of revelation by the *ācārya* (externally) and the path of revelation by the Supersoul (internally). The spiritual master is the external manifestation of the Supersoul. The Supersoul is the internal manifestation of the spiritual master. Both are equal

manifestations of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to bestow divine wisdom. Thus in either case it is ultimately Kṛṣṇa revealing to a qualified soul his or her spiritual identity when he or she is ready. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's criticism of *ekādaśa-bhāva* was therefore certainly not that the *ācārya* was incapable of serving as a medium for the revelation of a qualified disciple's spiritual identity. It was a censure against the attempt to supersede Kṛṣṇa's will by the indiscriminate and premature imposition of a specific role in Kṛṣṇa-*līlā* upon those obviously not fit:

A Vaiṣṇava should never speak on *rasa* to one who has pliable faith. A Vaiṣṇava should never attempt to bestow qualification for *rasa* upon one who is unqualified to receive it. (*Prākṛta-rasa-śata-dūsini*)²⁴

This practice of the detailed revelation of one's *svarūpa* at initiation usually finds its justification from the definition of *dīkṣā* from the *āgama* quoted by Śrī Jīva in *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā*. There *dīkṣā* is defined as the process of bestowing *divya-jñāna* (divine wisdom). The definition of *divya-jñāna* is further expanded by reference to the *Padma Purāna* as "awareness of the Lord's constitutional identity and one's specific relation with the Lord transmitted through a mantra".²⁵ Certainly initiation into the *dīkṣā* mantras of a particular Vaiṣṇava lineage gives one the form of God to be worshiped in that line and the potentiality to awaken that specific relationship, in our case Vrajendra-nandana Kṛṣṇa, but that cannot mean the revelation of one's spiritual identity before one has the legitimate eagerness to appreciate it. We have already documented (*B.r.s.* 1.2.291) that intense eagerness (*lobha*) is the pre-requisite for entering the path to such revelation.²⁶

Although Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had good reasons for establishing boundaries for advanced practices, it would also be a mistake to think he was divorcing himself from the rich tradition of devotional meditations practiced by Śrī Caitanya and His followers. After-all, the six Gosvāmī's left a mine of literary treasures for guided meditation under the direction of those learned in *śāstra* and cognizant of their relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Even the *Bṛhad-bhāgavāmṛta*, mentioned before for its promotion of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, ends with *Bhakti-rasāyana*, a process of deep meditation on Kṛṣṇa's pastimes based on the *Bhāgavatam*. In other words, as the mind becomes sufficiently purified, *smaraṇa* or concentrated remembrance is recommended, for it not only assists one to further purify the mind²⁷, but it helps a budding realization of one's spiritual identity become fully mature. *Ācāryas* like Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura thus taught the need for focused meditation along with *nāma-bhajana*:

Whatever I contemplate during my spiritual practices, I will attain when I have a spiritual body. That is the path of devotional service. The treasure I hanker for during my *sādhana*. I will attain in my *siddha* body. It is simply a matter of being ripe or raw. (*Prema-bhakti-candrikā*, Song 5 Verse 8)

It is interesting to note that along with cautioning his followers repeatedly about the dangers of reaching beyond their level of *śraddhā* in their devotional practices (such as prematurely adopting *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā-smaraṇa*), Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta also saw it necessary, at least on one occasion, to warn them about the pitfalls of not practicing to their full potential (such as not adopting *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā-smaraṇa* when qualified). His lecture delivered at Rādhā-kuṇḍa during the *Vraja-maṇḍala parikramā* in 1932 should be noted for his effort to make sure that his legacy in terms of *rāgānuga-sādhana* would not be misunderstood amidst his fervent opposition to *sahajiyism*. Three short excerpts of that lecture below demonstrate that attempt:

All these days we have not spoken about *līlā*. Why? Because this is our most confidential asset. This is our only *sādhya*. But one should not make the mistake of thinking that *anartha-nivṛtti* is the *prayojana*. One thinking like this will never enter into *artha-pravṛtti*. For this reason I will begin speaking about *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā-smaraṇa*.

[...] This is transcendental reality. If we do not know of this transcendental realm, then all of our efforts may end in *nirviśeṣa-vāda*.

[...] Those who have chanted the *harināma* for fifteen or twenty years should know such things. The beginners need not hear these topics or they will be misunderstood. (*The Gauḍīya* 1934)

I've heard from a number of sources that it was also a standard practice in the Gauḍīya Maṭh to read the complete *Bhajana Rahasya* in the month of Kārttika during the time of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta. The *Bhajana Rahasya* is Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's personal guide to *nāma-bhajana* based on the Śikṣāṣṭaka. It includes many verses relevant to higher levels of meditation.

To complete the picture of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's approach to *rāgānuga-sādhana* something more needs to be added to the portrait. Bhaktisiddhānta adopted the role of an *ācārya*, in the sense that he thought it was necessary to repackage the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for his audience.²⁸ To fairly gauge his presentation we thus need to understand his audience.

It is important to note that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura began his mission at the beginning of the 20th century, which meant that the world was in the early stages of its transition to industrialism, changing from its predominantly agrarian roots for the first time in history. He was thus helping to usher Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism into modernity, into a world that was becoming increasingly materialistic and impious, both from the standpoint of history and the predictions of *śāstra*.²⁹ An argument could thus be made that at the time of Bhaktisiddhānta, and certainly in the years to come after him, as society became increasingly absorbed in activities for the pleasure of the body (a primary symptom of industrialism) an even stronger stress on *śāstric* cautions regarding the eligibility for *rāgānuga-bhakti* was required. The rigid requirements for meditation have already been touched upon by citing references from *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā*. It could also be contended that a more conservative adjustment was necessary due to the nature of the meditation itself, basically the amorous life of God, a process prone to exploitation for sensual motives, either subtle or gross.

The general hearers of Bhaktisiddhānta's message, especially as he began his mission in Calcutta, weren't like the audience that can be seen practicing *rāgānuga-bhakti* in scripture such as *Jaiva Dharma*: renunciates free to practice *nāma-bhajana* day and night in the sublime pastoral ashrams of Godruma-dvīpa. This raises an interesting question: if the deeper meditations of *rāgānuga-sādhana* ideally require such an environment, were even the general associates of Śrī Caitanya, who were, with few notable exceptions, householders, engaged in the types of intense meditation on *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā-smaraṇa* described in *Jaiva Dharma*?³⁰ At least in Śrī Caitanya's authorized biographies such descriptions are not revealed. What one does see is his associates immersed in *nāma-kīrtana*, especially the nocturnal ones at the house of Śrīvāsa. And when such a level of meditation is witnessed, it is only in the later stage of Śrī Caitanya's life at Purī, where He remained deeply absorbed throughout the night in the mood of Śrī Rādhā. Nourished in His longings by narrations and songs of devotion, and in the company of his most intimate associates, He set the perfect example for the practice and context of internal meditation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one calling for emulation, but at higher levels of renunciation and devotion.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's seeming prudence towards such types of *rāgānuga-sādhana* was apparently not just due to the lack of qualification of his audience, or his insistence, like his predecessors, on a step-by-step approach to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It was also likely that following his father's mission, he had imbibed a legitimate concern for the stature of Śrī Caitanya's movement. Although I have not seen a thorough analysis of the condition of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism during his time, we do know that it had become substantially marginalized. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura could not even locate a copy of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, the main text of the tradition! What we do know for certain is how Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta viewed the state of contemporary Vaiṣṇavism through the many statements he made vigorously opposing the premature awakening of transcendental mellows. For instance:

Selfish enjoyment of one's senses in mundane lust is never called *prema* by the genuine devotee. A bona-fide spiritual master never tells his disciple you are absorbed in the mellows of divine *rasa*. (*Prākṛta-rasa-śata-dūṣinī*)³¹

It appears Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta perceived another threat to the Vaiṣṇava spiritual community from the premature adoption of *rāgānuga-bhakti*. By taking to advanced practices, immature devotees could too easily fall prey to pride, thinking themselves better than others, a serious impediment in spiritual life considering that *dainya*, utter humility, is the foundation of *prema*.³² It is thus significant that when challenged at Rādhā-kuṇḍa about having a *siddha*-mantra, he quoted the third verse of the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*:

One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor yet is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord. (C.c. Adi 17.31)

Finally, one cannot properly understand the *Bhajana-śikṣā* of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, his particular recommendation for spiritual practice (*sādhana*), without discussing his passion for the wide scale proliferation of *kīrtana*. He certainly considered the propagation of *kīrtana* central for the internal spiritual development of his disciples. The essence of *rāga-bhakti* is the disposition of selfless service to the residents of Vṛndāvana. He thus viewed the propagation of *kīrtana*, which requires an all-consuming dedication to the service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, as a powerful yet safe process to both purify the mind and awaken spontaneous devotion.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, however, was aware that any activity can be subject to exploitation, not just *rāga-mārga*. Missionary activities must thus be accompanied by internal development:

Preaching without proper conduct falls within the category of *karma*, mundane activity. Without criticizing the nature of others, one should correct oneself—this is my personal instruction. (*Upadeśāvalī*, 8)

Thus although he discouraged solitary *bhajana* based on *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā-smaraṇa*, he was a strong proponent of intense *nāma-kīrtana-sādhana* for personal purification: “By profusely performing *harināma-kīrtana* upon relinquishing the body, we will experience the ultimate reward of embodied life” (*Upadeśāvalī* 15).

By doing both *kīrtana* and preaching, he reasoned, one had the best chance to cultivate the selfless absorption in service at the heart of *vraja-bhakti*. Certainly, this was also the central element of the mission of his eminent disciple Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami, who successfully carried Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's teachings to the western world.

Anytime there is a legitimate innovation in presenting spiritual principles, danger lurks both for those who resist change and those who adopt it. The resisters of change risk becoming ineffective in the communication of their principles by keeping them in a format no longer relevant. In contrast, the adapters of change risk obscuring those principles in their attempt to reformat them. The hazards of not tempering the presentation of *rāgānuga-sādhana* for modernity, as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta outlined, have already been discussed in depth. It is thus appropriate to end the analysis by discussing the potential risks to the faithful in their attempt to adopt his approach to this subject.

When an *ācārya* communicates his innovations, he must strongly emphasize his point to ensure it is not misunderstood. While the teacher is cognizant that he is emphasizing a point from a broader context, his faithful students often are not. Their natural inclination, therefore, is to overemphasize the point being stressed. Therefore a great impediment to imbibing and sharing the teachings of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, especially his focus on *vaidhī bhakti*, is the tendency to separate those teachings from the tradition to which they were born.³³ To do so would certainly cause serious misconceptions, at least for the Gauḍīyas, for their practice of *vaidhī bhakti* is never meant to be

disconnected from their rich tradition of *rāga-mārga*. This caution is especially relevant for his grand-disciples who had no previous connection with Indian thought and culture before encountering the mission of Śrī Caitanya as adults.

The connection between *vaidhī bhakti* and *rāgānuga-bhakti* in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is analyzed clearly in the last section of *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā*.³⁴ If one lacks *ruci*, a natural taste for devotion, Śrī Jīva explains, one must be vigilant to consciously regard scriptural injunctions. If such a person tries to spontaneously execute devotional service out of attachment, he will fall prey to the whims of the mind and lose fixity in his practice. Still, however, he insists, such a person should execute *rāgānuga-bhakti*. To resolve the apparent contradiction, he then offers an example of how such a devotee, one on the level of *vaidhī bhakti*, can chant the *gopāla*-mantra while mixing both obligatory (*vaidhī*) and spontaneous (*rāga*) moods. Remaining consciously fixed in one's spiritual practices out of duty (*vaidhī bhakti*), one should consciously cultivate a taste for Vraja (*rāgānuga-bhakti*) by thinking of the meaning of the mantra while visualizing "Śrī Kṛṣṇa along with His associates, who all are attracted by the sound of his flute at the time of the milking of the cows." One can also, he recommends, contemplate as follows:

I am directly a particular resident of Vraja and that in order to have my specific desire fulfilled for the Lord's service, my revered spiritual master, who directly serves Śrī Vrajendra-nandana, has instructed me in this worship.³⁵

In other words, those not on the level of taste, although acting out of duty, should still cultivate an attraction to the mood of the eternal residents of Vṛndāvana (and Māyāpura) by applying to their spiritual practices their aspirations and thoughts concerning *vraja-bhakti* according to their realization.³⁶

This obviously also implies a serious cultivation of the five most potent practices of devotional service, which means:

- 1) The serious study of scriptures, like the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, where pure devotion, especially of the residents of Vṛndāvana, is described.
- 2) The worship of specific Deities in connection with Vṛndāvana such as Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.
- 3) Residence at and pilgrimage to the places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes like Māyāpura and Vṛndāvana.
- 4) The association of advanced devotees who can appropriately inspire a mood of spontaneous devotion.
- 5) *Kīrtana* of Vṛndāvana, including the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra (the *yugala* mantra).

Such regulated devotional activities consciously imbued with *rāga*, as described above, are what Śrī Jīva explains as *ajāta-ruci-rāgānuga-bhakti* (following in the wake of spontaneous devotion before taste has awoken).³⁷ This is what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta is actually recommending when emphasizing *vaidhī bhakti*.³⁸

In other words it was not a divorce from the tradition's emphasis on *rāgānuga-bhakti* that he was recommending by his strong cautions, but a warning to remain strictly under scriptural injunctions until *ruci* (legitimate taste) awakens.

His emphasis on this type of *vaidhī bhakti* was also a warning to not jump artificially to the level of practice where actual taste (*ruci*) is required, a platform of practice that Śrī Jīva explains as *jāta-ruci-rāgānuga-bhakti*. Such *rāgānuga-sādhana* is called *jāta-ruci* (taste that has been born), as opposed to *ajāta-ruci* (taste that has not yet been born), because it is the stage of devotion where authentic taste (*ruci*) for, or realization of, one's specific relationship with Kṛṣṇa has been truly awakened or born (*jāta*). It is thus the platform where the practice of *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇa*, which requires such realization, can honestly be practiced. It is this level of *rāgānuga-sādhana*, one requiring a genuine

realization of one's specific relationship with Kṛṣṇa (*jāta-ruci-rāgānuga-bhakti*), which Bhaktisiddhānta condemned when adopted prematurely, and not the attempt to cultivate a more spontaneous mood of devotion within one's regulated spiritual activities (*ajāta-ruci-rāgānuga-bhakti*).³⁹ How could it be otherwise? If he was simply recommending worship purely by scriptural injunctions he would be ignoring the base warning at the core of Śrī Caitanya's philosophy, quoted before, that by *vaidhī bhakti* practice one cannot attain Vṛndāvana, the goal of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism:

Everywhere in the world people worship Me according to scriptural injunctions. But simply by following such regulative principles one cannot attain the loving sentiments of the devotees in Vrajabhumi. (C.c. Ādi 3.16)

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's standpoint on the contemporary practice of *rāgānuga-bhakti* can be summarized as follows:

- 1) He gave credence to the ideal of the advanced meditations of the tradition, but gave very strong wind to the *śāstric* cautions against the premature adoption of the discussion and practice of advanced mellows.
- 2) Although his cautions were supported by *śāstra*, for the reasons documented above, he was still considerably more conservative in his instructions about *rāga-mārga* than the teachings and books of his predecessors, even the most immediate one, his father Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.
- 3) Although conservative in his approach to *rāgānuga-sādhana*, he was not recommending just *vaidhī bhakti*, but *ajāta-ruci-rāgānuga-sādhana*, a conscious regard for scriptural injunctions combined with the appropriate internal cultivation of spiritual life, especially *nāma-kīrtana*, the hearing of *hari-kathā* from pure Vaiṣṇavas and the other main practices of pure devotional service in relationship to attaining Vrajabhumi.
- 4) He was especially confident, on the basis of *śāstra*, that *nāma-kīrtana* is by far the best method to achieve full spiritual accomplishment, including revelation of one's eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa.
- 5) He let it be known that although the matters of *rāgānuga-bhakti* should be approached with the utmost caution, the full wealth of the tradition in terms of *rāga-mārga* was available to those who had a proclivity for such meditation and who qualified themselves by the profuse performance of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*.
- 6) He viewed the preaching and proliferation of *kīrtana*, which require an ardent dedication to service, as helpful, if not essential, in purifying the mind, evoking mercy and attaining devotion to the lotus feet of Lord Gaura, which award eternal Vraja.⁴⁰

In conclusion, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta taught the path of *rāgānuga-bhakti*, but he was cautious in its application, not only because of warnings found in *śāstra* but because of his particular audience's frame of reference. To properly understand his approach, then, one must understand his role as an *ācārya* and the context of his teachings. A failure to do so, by either his detractors or followers, results in the same conclusion: disconnecting Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta from the tradition he was dedicated to preserving. His detractors would surely misunderstand the necessity and innovation of his presentation, thus viewing him as deviant, while his followers would also misunderstand him—they would misconstrue the context of his teachings and, as a result, see him as independent of the tradition.⁴¹

Endnotes

¹ All translations without citation information are my own in conjunction with Mahāmuni dāsa and Nityānanda dāsa.

² *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (B.r.s.) 1.2.292 states “*śrute*”, that greed awakens by hearing from the scriptures.

³ B.r.s. 1.2.294 commentary by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī.

⁴ Note: whenever we describe the practice of *rāgānuga-sādhana* and mention the worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, in Gauḍīya theology it also implies the worship of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Similarly when Vṛndāvana is mentioned as the goal of spiritual attainment, Māyāpura is also implied.

⁵ Bhaktivinoda also talks of another method of worship in *rāga-marga* called the “internal path”, which was given to Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, also through Svarūpa Dāmodara. The external path refers more to the external rituals of worship and the internal path to the cultivation of the mood of that worship. I have not found any reference to establish definitely whether these are two separate practices of worship, as sometimes inferred, or two components of one practice. In the same chapter Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī, the spiritual master, recommends to Vijaya, the disciple, to follow both the methods. First he asks him to understand the bhāvas illustrated in *Śrī Vilāpa Kusumanjalī*, written by Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, which is the internal path. He then recommends the *paddhati* of Śrīmān Dhyānachandra, which he calls “the distinguished treasure of our line”. On that basis, that both paths have been recommended to one person, it appears that the internal and external paths are two components of the process of worship in *rāga-marga* rather than two separate paths.

⁶ The closest historical reference to initiation into *ekadāsa-bhāva* is found in *Prema Vilāsa*, a biography of Śrī Caitanya, written by Nityānanda dāsa, a disciple of Jāhnavā, in the early 17th century. It is described there that Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī instructed Śrīnivāsa Ācārya on some aspects of *ekadāsa-bhāva*, such as one’s name, mood of service, and group. This text is not, however, widely accepted within the greater Gauḍīya community. In fact, there are even accusations that some sections have been interpolated to promote certain doctrines.

⁷ According to Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī there are five progressive stages of remembrance (*Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā* Anuccheda 278). He sets a high prerequisite of purity for *smaraṇa* in general. Obviously, however, the beginning stages of remembrance such as *smaraṇa* (general remembrance) and *dharāṇa* (concentration) have much less rigid prerequisites of purity than *dhyāna* (meditation), *dhruvānumṛti* (intense meditation) and *samādhi* (trance).

⁸ Unless otherwise noted, quotations of *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā* are from: Dr. Satyanārāyaṇa Dāsa and Bruce Martin, trans. *Śrī Bhakti Sandarbha*, 3 vols. (Vṛndavana: JĪVA institute, 2005).

⁹ The practices listed here are in the order of their discussion in *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā*. In other words, one’s devotional practice is a prerequisite for the next practice, indicating that there is a step-by-step process (*sādhana-krama*) to attain the level of *smaraṇa* practice.

¹⁰ Some prominent contemporary members of the Gauḍīya tradition outside of the line of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta suggest that one needs extraordinary contemplative and intellectual prowess to memorize and carry out the elaborate visualization techniques of such meditations above. Such qualifications are considered above and beyond one’s spiritual realization. Therefore, they claim that such meditation practices cannot be compulsory on the path of *rāga*, citing evidence that complete accomplishment in *rāga-mārga* can be achieved by *nāma-saṅkīrtana* alone. Some suggest that this is indicated by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, when he claims one can achieve perfection by *ekāṅga-bhakti* (the focus on one particular practice of devotional service). For example, Maṅīndranātha Guha, a prominent Gauḍīya practitioner and scholar of the late 20th century, argues extensively for single-form bhakti focused on *nāma-kīrtana* in his book, *Nectar of the Holy Name*. It is noteworthy that his book includes testimonials to the authenticity of his scholarship from arguably

three of the most prominent *sādhakas* of *rāgānuga-bhakti* in the last 50 years, Śrī Kanupriya Gosvāmī (his *diksa* guru), Tin Kudi Gosvāmī and Śrī Priyacaraṇa Dāsa Bābā.

¹¹ Although mental purity is not an absolute prerequisite to attain *rāgānuga-bhakti*, it helps one to concentrate on the Lord's pastimes in a way to become properly inspired by them.

¹² This verse is quoted in Anuccheda 3.10 of the *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā* to show the results of genuine *lobha*.

¹³ I have heard at times that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta did give *ekadāsa-bhāva*, but I have not yet found it reasonably substantiated. I wrote to Bhakti Vikāśa Swami who has done extensive research on Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta in preparation for a new book about him. I directly asked him if there was any strong evidence that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī gave *ekadāsa-bhāva*. He replied, "there is no strong evidence, but apparently he may have done, clandestinely". In other words, even if Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta did give *ekadāsa-bhāva*, it would be difficult to verify. It is a very intimate revelation that in likelihood he would not make public for the sake of the tenor of his mission.

¹⁴ I am not aware of any book named *Stava-Kusmāñjali*. Raghunātha dāsa wrote *Vilāpa-Kusmāñjali* and Śrī Rūpa wrote *Stava-mālā*.

¹⁵ *The Gauḍīya* (1934) indicates that he spoke something of *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇa* on the Vraja-maṇḍala parikrama in that year.

¹⁶ *Śrī Gauḍīya-Giti-Guccha* (Gaudiya Vedanta Publications, p.205). All translations provided from *Upadesāvali* are taken from this edition.

¹⁷ Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Bhaktivedanta Book Trust), Vedabase Folio E-book. All references from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* are from the BBT translation.

¹⁸ *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā*, Anuccheda 263

¹⁹ Translated by Neal Demonico, and found in his translation of the *Nectar of the Holy Name* by Manindranath Guha, Blazing Sapphire Press (2005), p.8

²⁰ *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* (B.b. 2.1.1), introductory prayers in Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary, translation by Neal Demonico and found in his translation of the *Nectar of the Holy Name* by Manindranath Guha, Blazing Sapphire Press (2005), p.8

²¹ All translations from *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* are from Gopīparanadhāna dāsa, trans. Śrī *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, 3vols (Los Angeles; Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 2002).

²² Ś.B. 11.2.40

²³ Viśvanātha's makes it specifically clear in this section of *Rāga-Vartma-Candrikā* clear that "the knowledge" referred to in this text refers to revelation of one's specific relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

²⁴ Translation from www.vtweb.com (translator not mentioned).

²⁵ *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā*, Anuccheda 283

²⁶ I was told by what I consider a reliable source at Rādhā-kuṇḍa that fifty years ago the standard for giving *ekadāsa-bhāva* was chanting of three hundred thousand names daily (192 rounds) for at least one year and that it was a meditation generally given after *bābājī* initiation.

²⁷ "Continuous remembrance of the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa destroys all inauspiciousness, extends tranquility, purifies the heart, awards bhakti for the Supreme Lord, and bestows knowledge accompanied by realization and detachment" (Ś.B. 12.12.55).

²⁸ Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta made many innovations for preaching, but here we are talking about his relatively conservative approach towards *rāgānuga-sādhana*, which included an increased stress on the practice, propagation and preaching of *kīrtana*.

²⁹ The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam predicted a gradual degradation of the character of people of today. See Ś.B. 1.1.10.

³⁰ The Lord's eternal associates are not *sādhakas*, but perfected souls. Still, they play the role of *sādhakas* to set the example for others.

³¹ Translation from www.vtweb.com (translator not mentioned).

³² See B.b. 2.5.221-225

³³ A good example of assimilating the instructions of the *acarya* in a balanced way is the approach of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swami to his guru's (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta) teachings on *rāgānuga-sādhana*. He

remained chaste to his teacher's conservative approach by his strict personal cautions to his disciples and by the tenor of his commentaries. He also made clear the context from which Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was speaking by also carefully pointing, when appropriate, to the advanced practices of the tradition. For example, in his book *Kṛṣṇa* he talks about the process of *līlā-smaraṇa*:

Since Kṛṣṇa had departed from Vṛndāvana and gone to Mathurā, the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, especially mother Yaśodā, Nanda Mahārāja, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the gopis and the cowherd boys, were simply thinking of Kṛṣṇa at every step. They were thinking, “Here Kṛṣṇa was playing in this way. Here Kṛṣṇa was blowing His flute. Kṛṣṇa was joking with us in this way, and Kṛṣṇa was embracing us like this.” This is called *līlā-smaraṇa*, and it is the process of association with Kṛṣṇa most recommended by great devotees; even Lord Caitanya, when He was at Purī enjoyed *līlā-smaraṇa* association with Kṛṣṇa. Those in the most exalted position of devotional service and ecstasy can live with Kṛṣṇa always by remembering His pastimes. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has given us a transcendental literary work entitled *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta*, which is full with Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Exalted devotees can remain absorbed in Kṛṣṇa-thought by reading such books. Any book of Kṛṣṇa-līlā, even this book, “Kṛṣṇa”, or our “Teachings of Lord Caitanya”, is actually solace for devotees feeling separation from Kṛṣṇa.

³⁴ Śrī *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, Anuccheda 312

³⁵ Our translation.

³⁶ It should be noted that although there is high eligibility for *smaraṇa* (concentrated remembrance), *mantra-upāsana*, visualizing the descriptions of the Lord's pastimes in various mantras, is recommended even at the stage of *vaidhī bhakti*. For example, in all standard Gauḍīya manuals for Deity worship there are meditations on the *yoga-pīṭha*, the place where the Lord meets with His associates in the spiritual world to accept formal worship.

³⁷ In the actual text of Śrī *Bhakti-sandarbhā* the term ‘*ajāta-ruci*’ refers not to the level of devotion, but to the practitioner. Therefore it is obvious that if the type of person practicing *rāgānuga-bhakti* without *ruci* is called *ajāta-ruci*, the practice of devotion by such a person can also be called *ajāta-ruci*. This point is developed in B V Tripurari Swami's monograph *Śrī Guru Paramparā*. The book contains many penetrating insights about these subjects.

³⁸ Śrīla AC Bhaktivedanta Swami also alludes to the practice of *ajāta-ruci-rāgānuga-bhakti* within the realm of *vaidhī bhakti* when he describes the mental culture of Kṛṣṇa consciousness: “A Kṛṣṇa conscious person engages his words in preaching the glories of the Lord. That is called *kīrtana*. And by his mind a Kṛṣṇa conscious person always thinks of the activities of the Lord—as he is speaking on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra or engaging in His various pastimes in Vṛndāvana with His devotees. In this way one can always think of the activities and pastimes of the Lord. This is the mental culture of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” (*Nectar of Devotion*, Intro)

³⁹ At the very beginning of the section on *Rāgānuga-bhakti*, Śrī Jiva describes how one can practice *rāgānuga-bhakti* before one has realized one's eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa: “When a person develops a taste for the aforesaid specific *rāga*, even though that *rāga* itself has not yet 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 one's teacher, one develops a taste for the actions of the *rāgātmika* associates also that are expressions of this *rāgātmika-bhakti*. Then by adhering to the *rāga* of a particular associate according to one's taste, one executes devotion, which is called *rāgānuga*. (Śrī *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, Anuccheda 310)

⁴⁰ The teachings of Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī, a contemporary follower of Śrī Caitanya, support this understanding: “When a pious person attains devotion to the lotus feet of Lord Gaura, the ocean of nectar from the lotus feet of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī suddenly floods his heart. (From Kuśakratha dāsa's translation of the *Caitanya-candrāmṛta*. Chapter 8, “Loka-śikṣā”)

⁴¹ I would like to thank the numerous devotees, too many to mention, who looked over the text and offered helpful comments and suggestions to improve it.