



- Bhakti -
The yoga of real
love



Essays written and compiled by
Tarun Govinda das

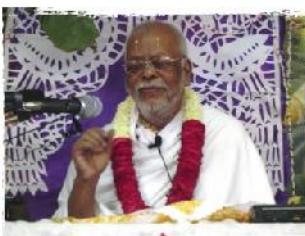




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Tarun Govinda das received initiation from Radhakunda Mahanta Sri Srimat Ananta das Babaji in 2004. Since then he studies his books and he tries to make the teachings of Sri Srimat Ananta das Babaji available to the English speaking world of devotees.





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1. Our situation (sambandha-tattva)

Everyone is looking for love. Everyone is looking for peace. Everyone is looking for happiness.

But we only get glimpses of these basic human necessities. Why? Because this world is not our real home.

We are actually spiritual beings, living in a material world. We are like a fish thrown out of the water.

Since thousands of years, mankind always asked one very important question: “Who am I?”

Am I this body? Am I German? Am I American? Am I a man? Am I a professor? Am I rich? All these answers can be changed any moment.

All these answers are based on a temporary nature.

When we come to the point of asking that there must be more to this, then actually spiritual life begins.

Who am I? What is my duty? Where do I come from? Where will I go?

The Vedic literature deals exactly with all these questions. In fact they state that if we do NOT ask these questions, our human life is wasted.

So, who am I?

I am NOT this body. I am NOT my thoughts. I am NOT my profession. I am NOT my gender.

I am a spiritual being. I am a spiritual soul. I HAVE a body, but I AM a soul. So, what is the nature of this “soul”?

Who am I truly?

The Vedic literature, called the Vedas, tell us that we are parts and parcels of a Supreme Being.

This Supreme Being has many names of which Krishna

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reigns supreme.

We are His parts like the rays are parts of the sun, like sparks are parts of a fire.

We are simultaneously one with God (Krishna) and different from Him.

We are one in QUALITY in that we are, like Him, ETERNAL.

We are different from Him in that we are parts and He is the Whole.

So we are all thirsty to feel happiness. To make experiences which go beyond this daily bodily “affairs”. We want feel happy constantly, all the time, not just for some short moments of time which we hanker after when they passed. We want to live in the present, but we are more concerned with the past and the future.

Secretly we know that actually real happiness must come from within. We know that this material happiness is certainly fine to a point, but we long for everlasting love, everlasting bliss.

When we truly start out to inquire about who we really are, we begin our journey of self-realization.

The knowledge about knowing who we are and what our relationship to Krishna is, the Vedas call “sambandha-jnana”. Sambandha-tattva is the knowledge of the relationships between Krishna, the soul(s), and the material world.

All souls (jivas) are eternally connected with Krishna, Who is the true object of all relations.

The eternal relationship between Krishna and all jivas is the relationship of a loving servant. By bhakti-yoga the souls can be freed from illusion and they can awaken in their heart their loving attachment to Krishna.

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In the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition, **Srila Sanatana Goswami** is considered to be the acharya (great teacher) of sambandha-tattva.

When he met Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he humbly asked the Lord the most important questions a human being can ask. In the Caitanya Caritamrita of Sripad Krishna das Kaviraja Goswami we can read about this beautiful encounter. Srila Sanatana Goswami asked this question for the benefit of all souls and afterwards, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu instructs him on this very important topic.

‘ke ami’, ‘kene amaya jare tapa-traya’ iha nahi jani
‘kemane hita haya’
- CC Madhya-lila 20.102

“Who am I? Why do the threefold miseries always give me trouble?”

So Mahaprabhu told Sripad Sanatana Goswami:

jivera ‘svarupa’ haya - krishnera ‘nitya-dasa’
krishnera ‘tatastha sakti’ ‘bhedabheda-prakasa’
- CC Madhya-lila, 20.108

“The jiva’s constitutional nature is to be an eternal servant of Sri Krishna. The jiva is the marginal potency of Krishna and a manifestation simultaneously one with and different from the Lord.”

As long as we are in harmony with our nature, as long as we are conscious of our spiritual nature, we can live a happy life, even in this material world.

As long as we always recognize our true purpose, to live in

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harmony as a servant of the Supreme Being, Sri Krishna, we will reach the goal of life.

Love is the way, love is the answer. Everything we do should be done in and with love.

This love should be directed to Sri Sri Radha Krishna and to all the creation, living, and non-living.

Suffering only comes from misbehaving. We think we are the enjoyer and we think we are the controller.

mamaivamso jiva-loke jiva-bhutah sanatanah
manah-shashthanindriyani prakriti-sthani karshati
- Sri Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagavad-Gita, ch. 15.7

“O Arjuna! I am ‘Sarvesvara (the Lord of all)’. All jivas are My parts and they are all eternal. Due to being conditioned and opposed to Me, they are struggling intensely with the mind and the senses in this material world.”

Krishna has three energies:

- **Cit-sakti:** This is His inner energy. His Own spiritual world pure cit-sakti. This cit-sakti again consists of three energies:
 1. Sandhini-sakti = eternal existence (I am)
 2. Samvit-sakti = eternal knowledge (I know)
 3. Hladini-sakti = eternal happiness (I am happy)
- **Bahiranga-sakti:** This is His “outer” energy. The material world is made of this energy.
- **Tatastha-sakti:** The energy “inbetween” the spiritual and the material world.

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We as living entities belong to Krishna's tatastha-sakti.

The jiva (the spiritual soul) is an infinitesimal particle of spiritual consciousness, like an atomic particle of light emanating from the sun. Sri Krishna is the complete spiritual consciousness, the transcendental sun. When the jivas focus their attention on Krishna, they go to Him.

Naturally, the parts serve the Whole. The car will never move when the wheels do not obey.

So naturally, the spiritual soul should serve the Supreme Soul.

The spiritual soul is said to be like a tiny spiritual "drop of consciousness" (cit-kana).

So like mentioned above, the drop of consciousness is belonging to the tatastha-sakti of Krishna. We are, so to speak, inbetween worlds...

As a jiva-soul, our symptom of life is consciousness. When the soul leaves a body, the consciousness is gone. Every soul is unique. Every soul has a unique consciousness and a unique relationship with the Supreme Soul, Krishna.

But since we are a tiny drop of consciousness inbetween two worlds, we are prone to be attracted by one of them. Since time immemorial, we have turned away from our real nature and from our real Source.

We are no longer inbetween the worlds, we are now fully sworn to our false nature.

Through the so-called false ego, this drop of consciousness chose to identify itself with matter. '

So we think we are this body with this name, home, profession, relatives, etc.

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But this drop of spiritual consciousness is not forever lost. When the living entity starts turning toward God, Krishna, self-realization is about to begin.

So, we already know what our dilemma is: We don't belong here.

We don't want to die. We don't want to suffer. We want to be happy.

Our real nature is the same as the nature of Krishna.

Krishna is sat-cit-ananda. We as parts of him share this nature to our most possible extent.

He is eternal, we are eternal.

He is forever blissful, we want to be forever blissful.

He is forever in knowledge, we want to be forever knowledgeable.

But we encounter obstacle after obstacle in this world, thanks to our false ego.

By freeing ourselves from this false ego and by becoming conscious of our eternal self we can reach this wonderful goal.

Now there are two different kinds of jiva-souls.

sei vibhinnamsa jiva-dui ta' prakara
eka-'nitya-mukta', eka-'nitya-samsara'
- CC Mad 22.1

“The jivas are divided into two categories. One is situated in eternal freedom in the spiritual world, the other is situated in material bondage within the samsara cycle of birth and death.”

Jiva Gosvami defines this even further:

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tad evam ananta eva jivakhyas tatasthah saktayah tatra
tasam varga-dvayam
eko vargo' nadita eva bhagavad-unmukhah anyas tv anadita
eva bhagavatparanmukhah
svabhavaatas tadiya-jnana-bhavaat tadiya-jnanabhavaat ca

- Paramatma Sandarba 47

“The number of jivas is unlimited. They are divided into two classes. One class is favourable to the Lord from a time without beginning. The other class is averse to the Lord from a time without beginning. The first class is favourable to the Lord because of knowledge of relationship with the Lord. The second class is averse to the Lord because of lack of that knowledge.”

So there are now those who are eternally liberated and always together with Krishna and there are those who are since eternal time conditioned by material nature.

If we can't accept this fact and if we find this “unfair” and if we see this as our misfortune, it is due to our wrong perspective.

It is not “unfair”. It is the sweet will of Krishna. Everything is for His pleasure. There is no “fair” and “unfair”.

These conceptions arise from our mind, in love with our false ego.

Krishna is lila-maya. He is the Lord of “plays”, lilas. He can do whatever He likes.

It is His lila to get what He doesn't have: our love.

By our free will, we can turn away from Krishna, but by turning towards Him, we can make Him so happy. He is thirsty for this love. It must be pure and unconditional. By performing love-in-action, we can direct all our love from our soul to Him.

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Also we should understand that these “ever-free” souls are very helpful for us.

They are our “role-models”. We will later on come back to those “role-models”.

We can approach Krishna with different attitudes. We can approach Him in a very respectful mood in awe and reverence (aishvarya) or we can approach Him in a very sweet and loving way (madhurya).

We are very lucky conditioned souls, because just recently, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu came to bestow upon us the sweetest and loving mood, the mood of the gopis of Vrindavana.

Srila Sanatana Goswami brilliantly elaborates on this “sambandha-tattva” in his fantastic masterpiece “**Sri Brihad Bhagavatamrita**”.

Everyone should read this book and learn about the journeys of the main characters Narada Muni and Gopa Kumara and thereby learn about the different relationships (sambandha-tattva).

Narada Muni was looking for the devotee who has the greatest love for Krishna and the respected reader learns about the different relationships pure devotees have with Krishna, finally coming to Uddhava who speaks about the highest love for Krishna which Uddhava found in the heart of the gopis of Vrindavana.

Gopa Kumara received mantra-initiation from an inhabitant of Vraja and starts to travel through all spheres of consciousness, through the heavenly planets, Brahma’s realm, Shiva’s planet, Vaikuntha and finally finding his beloved destination, Goloka Vrindavana.

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There he realizes that the inhabitants of Goloka Vrindavana have the most wonderful relationship with Krishna, a relationship full of the purest and selfless love. By following them, we can develop the same love they have for the Divine Couple. By following them, we can achieve perfection.

When we read about the pastimes of Sri Sri Radha and Krishna, our hearts will fill up with the desire to always be with them. The jiva-soul can achieve this marvellous goal. This is the most wonderful gift of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. By His mercy, the jiva-souls can experience a love so pure and blissful, that only Srimati Radharani can surpass in quantity and quality.

anarpita-carim cirat karunayavatirnah kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasam sva-bhakti-sriyam
harih purata-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandipitah
sada hridaya-kandare sphuratu vah saci-nandanah

“May the Supreme Lord, who is known as the son of Srimati Saci-devi 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 has ever offered before:
the most sublime and radiant mellow of devotional service, the mellow of conjugal love.”

This most divine gift is so extraordinary and rare, but openly accessible at the same time.
To find a teacher, a true Gurudeva, who can impart this

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marvellous gift into our hearts is the beginning of this beautiful transformation of this “drop of consciousness”. A marriage between tatastha-sakti and both hladini- and samvit-sakti (bhakti) takes place and the jiva-soul is on its way to eternal freedom in pure love of Godhead.

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2. Understanding jiva-tattva

Sadhaka:

Dear Gurudeva, recently I had a discussion with other devotees.

They claimed that our eternal relationship, our eternal rasa is already imprinted, like a blueprint, in our soul.

They say that we can imagine the jivas like being 'seeds'.

Every seed has the potential to grow into a certain tree. An apple seed brings forth an apple, a mango seed brings forth a mango. So in the same way, in each jiva, there already exists the eternal relationship with Krishna, our eternal rasa. We only have to re-awake it or uncover it.

Gurudeva:

My dear child, to properly answer this question, we have to understand the tattva about the jivas. We have to analyze everything about the spiritual soul.

First of all, we have to know that Sri Krishna has three energies:

- Cit-sakti: This is His inner energy. His Own spiritual world pure cit-sakti. This cit-sakti again consists of three energies:
 1. Sandhini-sakti = eternal existence (I am)
 2. Samvit-sakti = eternal knowledge (I know)
 3. Hladini-sakti = eternal happiness (I am happy)
- Bahiranga-sakti: This is His “outer” energy. The material world is made of this energy.

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- Tatastha-sakti: The energy “inbetween” the spiritual and the material world.

The spiritual soul is said to be like a tiny spiritual “drop of consciousness” (cit-kana). The jiva belongs to the tatastha-sakti.

The jiva (the spiritual soul) is an infinitesimal particle of spiritual consciousness, like an atomic particle of light emanating from the sun.

Sri Krishna is the complete spiritual consciousness, the transcendental sun. When the jivas focus their attention on Krishna, they go to Him.

Naturally, the parts serve the Whole. The car will never move when the wheels do not obey.

So naturally, the spiritual soul should serve the Supreme Soul.

**jivera ‘svarupa’ haya - krishnera ‘nitya-dasa’
krishnera ‘tatastha sakti’ ‘bhedabheda-prakasa’
- Caitanya Caritamrita Madhya-lila, 20.108**

The jiva’s constitutional nature is to be an eternal servant of Sri Krishna. The jiva is the marginal potency of Krishna and a manifestation simultaneously one with and different from the Lord.

So, we are simultaneously one and different from the Lord. We are His sakti, He is saktiman (controller of energies). This is called acintya-bheda-bheda-tattva. We are of a similar nature, but also different. This tattva rests upon Him being Saktiman and us jivas being His sakti. The energy-giver and the energy are simultaneously one

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and different. He is the Whole, we are His parts. We can see clearly that one thing is "inherent" in the svarupa of the jiva: eternal servitorship. We will always be servants.

Sadhaka:

They say that the verse you quoted, "jivera 'svarupa' haya - krishnera 'nitya-dasa' krishnera 'tatastha sakti' 'bhedabheda-prakasa'", means that everything is already THERE in the svarupa of the jiva.

Gurudeva:

This verse does not at all say that "everything" is there in the svarupa of the jiva, neither the rasa, nor the form, nor bhakti...

It only means that the jiva is an energy (sakti) of the Lord and that the jiva is in the function of servanthood to the controller and owner of the energy (saktiman, Sri Krishna). This relationship of servant and the One to be served is eternal.

By the way, the analogy of the "seed-like" form or "stage" is only used in sastra to describe the bhakti-lata-bija and it nicely explains the progress of bhakti. It is never used in the context of the svarupa of the jiva.

To say that the jiva already has a blueprint in its form of his eternal relationship to Krishna is not correct.

It is necessary to understand that in order to have a relationship with Krishna, we must engage in loving devotion, bhakti. Without bhakti, there can be no

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relationship with Krishna.

First we engage in bhakti, THEN we establish our relationship (RASA) with Krishna.

Sadhaka:

Are you saying that bhakti is also not inherent in the jiva?
They told me yesterday this verse from the Caitanya Caritamrita as being the evidence that bhakti, love, is eternally in the heart of the jivas:

**nitya-siddha krsna-prema sadhya kabhu naya
sravavadi-suddha-citte karaye udaya**

"Pure love for Krsna is eternally established in the hearts of living entities. It is not something to be gained from another source. When the heart is purified by hearing and chanting, the living entity naturally awakens."

- (CC. M. 22.107)

Gurudeva:

I am very sorry, but the translation of this verse is not correct.

Some words have been added in the translation, which are not there. The words "is eternally established in the heart" is not found in this verse. And also "udaya" doesn't mean "awake", it means "arise". So PREMA is not THERE, it is not dormant and not to be "awoken". It arises WHEN THE HEART IS PURIFIED by the angas of bhakti. The correct translation is:

"Krishna prema is eternal and perfect. It is never to be

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"attained" (by endeavours).

Prema arises in the citta (heart/consciousness) which has been purified by devotional activities (hearing, chanting,...)."

So pure love is nothing which is "manufactured". It "arises". That means it is not dormant in the heart of the jiva.

Consequently, bhakti is not inherent in the svarupa of the jiva.

Bhakti is a most merciful gift which is given "from the outside"...from someone who already has received bhakti.

To properly understand the verse from above, we need to focus on this one:

brahma bhramite kona bhagyavan jiva
guru krsna prasade paya bhakti-lata-bija

"By the causeless mercy of guru and Krsna, the devotee can receive the seed of bhakti by the mercy of Gurudeva."

Here we see that the jiva RECEIVES the seed of bhakti.

Now, this "BHAKTI"-energy is a very mysterious energy.

It is a combination of two energies of Krishna.

"Bhakti" is "made of" samvit-sakti (knowledge/realization) and hladini-sakti (bliss). Ultimately BHAKTI rests in the heart of the personification of Krishna's innermost energy, Srimati Radharani.

Both of these energies belong to Krishna's INNER POTENCY.

The jiva belongs to the marginal energy (tatastha-sakti), so by definition, BHAKTI can not be "already" in the heart of the spiritual soul.

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BUT: The spiritual soul has the "potency" to love. We can love through our false ego and we can love through our real ego, the drop of spiritual consciousness.

When this spiritual drop of consciousness (the spiritual soul) comes into contact with the BHAKTI-energy, the soul will be on the path to realize where it really belongs to.

Sadhaka:

How can we come into contact with this bhakti-energy?

Gurudeva:

BHAKTI can only be received from someone who has already received BHAKTI. It is said that BHAKTI flows down from the spiritual world (Krishna's inner energy) to the material realm through the riverbed of an unbroken Guru-parampara.

We find the following verse in the Madhurya Kadambini about the nature of BHAKTI as being fully independent of anything:

tasya bhagavata iva tad rupaya bhakter api
svaprakasatasiddhyartham eva hetutvanapekshata.
tathahi 'yato bhaktir adhokshaje ahaitukyapratihata'
ityadau hetum vinaivavirbhavatiti tatrarthah. tathaiva
'yadricchaya mat kathadau' 'mad bhaktim ca
yadricchaya' 'yadricchayaivopacita' ityadavapi
yadricchayetyasya svacchandenetyarthah. yadriccha
svairitetyabhidhanat

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TRANSLATION: The self-manifesting eternal energy of the Lord, bhakti, being nondifferent from the Lord, is not dependent on any other cause. Srimad-Bhagavata (1.2.6) describes the independent appearance of bhakti, “Devotional service to Lord Adhokshaja, Who is beyond the senses of all human beings, is the best of all religions because such devotion is causeless and uninterrupted by obstacles.” Similarly, the words of the Lord, “by chance if one attains faith in hearing My glories,” “by chance if one attains bhakti,” “by chance if bhakti manifests” refer to the Lord’s independent will. The word yadriccha means independent will. The dictionary also mentions yadriccha as spontaneous or self-will.

So we can only nicely understand the verse 'nitya-siddha krsna-prema sadhya kabhu naya sravavadi-suddha-citte karaye udaya' when we understand 'brahmanda bhramite kona bhagyavan jiva guru krsna prasade paya bhakti-lata-bija'.

“Wandering throughout the universe, some fortunate soul receives the seed of devotion, by the grace of Guru or Krishna.”

Every word is significant here
- *kon* means “some”, not that everyone gets it. *pay* means 'he/she gets', not that it's intrinsic – it's coming from outside. *prasada* means that it isn't deserved, but is causeless grace. One cannot work in advance to attain it.

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Sadhaka:

So it is actually an active "act"...we really receive something, a wonderful gift...the bhakti-lata-bija...

Gurudeva:

Absolutely. It happens at the moment when we come into contact with Sri Gurudeva.

It is a gift from someone who is in possession of this gift. It is all based on mercy...

Sadhaka:

So it is not dependent on our endeavours?

Gurudeva:

No. We can only purify our citta to receive this gift properly.

The verse nitya siddhasya bhāvasya from the Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu (1.2.2, quoted just before the nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema - verse in the Caitanya Caritāmṛta) confirms this- this nitya siddha bhāva is the goal, it is not to be achieved artificially.

Jīva Goswāmī comments on B.R.S. 1.2.2:

bhāvasya sādhyatve krtrimatvāt parama-
purusārthatvābhāvah sādityāśankyāha—nityeti |
bhagavac-chakti-viśesa-vṛtti-viśesatvenāgre
sādhayisyamānatvād iti bhāvah , i.e.

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- “If bhāva is attained mechanically (krtrima means something that is not produced naturally or spontaneously), it cannot be the highest goal of life.

In order to clear this doubt the verse says – nitya-siddhasya bhāvasya.

The meaning is that in the first place it happens by a special function of the Lord's potency“.

The word nitya siddha means nitya-siddha bhaktas according to Mukunda Goswami in his comment on this verse:

nitya-siddha-bhaktesu śuddha-sattva-viśesa-rūpatayā sadā
vartamānasyātra svayam sphuranān na krtrimatva-śankā |
atah śrī-kṛsna-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaih
[bha.ra.si. 1.2.234]
iti vaksyamānatvāt |
sādhana-bhaktir eva na krtrimā, kim uta bhāvah –

“The pure sattva which is ever present in the nitya siddha devotees manifests itself and thus should not be seen as artificial.

This can be seen in verse 1.2.234, atah śrī kṛsna nāmādi. Surely sādhana bhakti is not artificial, what to speak of bhāva.”

Jīva Gosvāmī comments on that Bhakti Rasāmrta Sindhu verse (1.2.234):

sevonmukhe hīti | sevonmukhe bhagavat-svarūpa-tan-
nāma-grahanāya pravrtta ity arthah | hi prasiddhau | yathā
mrga-śarīram tyajato bharatasya varnitam | nārāyanāya
haraye nama ity udāram hāsyam mrgatvam api yah
samudājahāra [bhāgavata purana. 5.14.45] iti | yathā ca

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gajendrasya jajāpa paramam jāpyam prāg-janmany
anuśiksitam [bhāgavata purana 8.3.1] ity ādi

“Sevonmukhe means one becomes inclined to chant the holy name of the Lord. The examples of Bharata in the deer-body, and Gajendra the elephant are very famous in this regard. They had animal tongues, but since they had a desire to chant the name of Krsna, svayam eva sphuratyadah - all this became spontaneously manifest.”

Bhakti is of svarūpa-śakti and the jīva is of tatastha śakti. Therefore, bhakti cannot be intrinsic to the jīva.

So, yes, my dear, bhakti is not inherent in the svarupa of the jīva. It is an external gift. Only the potency to receive bhakti and happiness is in the heart of the jīva.

I also happen to know that in Mayapur there is a beautiful temple called "Caitanya Candrodaya".

So "Chandra" and "udaya"...the moon has arisen or the rising moon.

It doesn't mean "the awakening of the moon".

Sadhaka:

I understand fully what you are saying. But what about the jīva being of a 'sat-cit-ananda' - nature?

The devotees quoted one of their acaryas:

“In the *sruti-sastra* it is said: ‘Eternity, knowledge and bliss are part of the soul's nature.’

But they couldn't say which exact sastra he referred to...

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Gurudeva:

To be very honest, it would be very good to have a sastric reference to that statement at hand.

But in my whole life, I never found the concept of the *jīva* having the same qualities like Krishna in any *sastra*. We will come to this shortly.

It is true that the nature of the *jīva* is 'sat-cit-ananda'. But like mentioned before, we have to understand the position and the nature of the *jīva*.

Krishna's qualities and His eternal associates' qualities of 'sat-cit-ananda' are of His inner energy, of His *svarupa-sakti*.

The *jīva* is of *tatastha-sakti*, so the *jīva* is "in another category" of energies, so the "attributes" to his form (*svarupa*) are in another category too.

Krishna is eternal (*sat*), FULL of knowledge/awareness (*cit*), FULL of bliss (*ananda*).

The bliss (*ananda*) that comes with *bhakti* is called *bhaktyananda*. This is the *hlādinī*-aspect of the *cit-chakti*.

The Lord's *ananda* is two-fold according to Jīva Gosvāmī's *Prīti Sandarbha* (66):

svarūpananda and *svarūpa-śaktyānanda*.

The Lord Himself is depending on *svarūpa-śaktyānanda* (*svarūpa-śaktyānanda-rūpa yadānanda-parādhīnah śrī-bhagavān apīti*). This *ananda* is *bhakti*.

The Śruti quite clearly says that *ananda* is not a property of the *jīva*:

raso vai sah, rasam by evāyam labdhvānandī bhavati, "God is

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verily *rasa*. If one attains *rasa*, one becomes blissful“.
Apart from that, in the *ānandamayādhikarana* of the
Vedānta-sūtras, the ācāryas explain that the *jīva* is
not *ānandamaya*.

In the commentary to the *sūtra 'vikāra-śabdān neti cen na
prācuryāt'*, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana refutes the idea that the
word *ānanda-maya* could be applied to the *jīva* (*tasmat
ānandamayo na jīvah*), and this is the case also in the liberated
state which means non-existence of suffering (*na
cānandamaya-śabdena muktau dubkhāpty-asadbhāvaj jīva iti
vācyam*).

In addition, commenting on the definition of the *jīva* as *cid-
ānandātmaka*, Jīva Gosvāmī explains in Paramātmā
Sandarbha (29) that the *jīva* is not *ānanda* in the proper
sense of the word:
*duhkha-pratiyogitvena tu jñānatvam ānandatvam ca ... ānandatvam
nirupādhi-premāspadatvena sādhayati.*

“Because the *jīva* is beyond misery, it is said to be of the
nature of consciousness and bliss ... The *jīva* attains bliss
when it attains love of God. “

However, Jīva Gosvāmī mentions the *ānanda* of the *jīva* in
Prīti Sandarbha (Anu. 65):
ato natarām jīvasya svaripānanda-riupā, atyanta-ksudratrāt.

He says that it is extremely minute. But one has to
understand the statement in connection with the previous
one, i.e. that the *ānanda* means just the non-existence of
misery.

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Sadhaka:

Thank you so much for these many sastric references. But I am not very intelligent...can you make it a little easier for me to understand?

Gurudeva:

I know that it sounds very philosophical, but it is easy to understand:

The jiva is eternal (sat) like Krishna too. But as far as knowledge/awareness (cit) is concerned, the jiva's awareness and knowledge differs quite substantially from the awareness/knowledge of Krishna.

We as jivas are aware of our soul, of our bodies and of our surroundings. It is not that we are actually FULL OF KNOWLEDGE and somehow we "forgot" this knowledge. Our ignorance is beginningless (anadi) and we have never been FULL OF knowledge.

If we are full of knowledge and bliss, then why do we never feel it? Why are we incessantly hankering for knowledge and bliss?

In fact, all our actions are ultimately aimed at attaining these two goals.

Just as darkness can never cover light, ignorance can never shroud knowledge.

Darkness is nothing but absence of light. It is not a positive entity. To cover something, the covering agent must have positive existence.

When Krsna says that ignorance covers knowledge (Gita 5.15), He means ignorance covers the discriminating faculty. In other words, a person loses the ability to make

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proper decisions and is thus bewildered. Krsna Himself recommends approaching a teacher and acquiring knowledge from him (Gita 4.34).

If knowledge were inside the Self, He would have recommended to approach a teacher to get the covering of inherent knowledge removed. Indeed He would not even have recommended going to a teacher but to a peeler, who can peel away ignorance. Krishna specifically uses the words, “The teachers will impart knowledge to you.” In the same vein a few verses later (Gita 4.39), Krishna says that a man of faith who attains knowledge (*jnana*) become peaceful. If that knowledge were already there, there was no need to attain it in the first place. In verse 7.2. again, Krishna declares to Arjuna that He will now impart unto him this knowledge.

If I were full of bliss and knowledge, then how could I lose sight of it even if I were covered by ignorance? Ignorance can only cover, but not take away, that knowledge. Even though there may be ignorance all around me, I would still be full of knowledge and bliss. But such is not our experience.

Sadhaka:

I always wondered about that...I agree fully...

Gurudeva:

Often the soul is compared to a drop of the ocean and Krishna being the ocean.

A drop of the ocean does not have all the qualities of the ocean. The ocean has waves, a drop does not. The ocean is

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full of aquatics, but not the drop. One can sail on the ocean, not on a drop.

If I have forgotten about my necklace around my neck and someone points it out to me, I immediately know it and give up my search. But no matter how many times someone tells me that I am full of knowledge and bliss, I realize no bliss and remain as ignorant or knowledgeable as I was before. Why?
Because I do not have knowledge and bliss inherent in me.

Such examples neither prove nor disprove anything. Examples only assist us in comprehending a known conclusion. If I am a pauper, I remain a pauper, even though someone may repeatedly tell me that I am a prince.

In *Paramatma Sandarbha* (28), Sri Jiva Gosvami explicitly says that the self is devoid of knowledge, although conscious by nature, and it lacks bliss although free of any material misery.

In other words, it has the potential (*svarupa yogyata*) to get knowledge and bliss but not yet the functionality (*phalopadhai yogyata*). To give an example, a child has the potential to be an athlete or a graduate, but that potential is not realized unless he practices on the track or goes to college and studies.

Then, happiness or bliss (ananda): Like Sripad Jiva Goswami said, our happiness is VERY minute. We can't compare the happiness "within the *tatatha-sakti*" with the happiness "within Krishna inner energy (*svarupa-sakti*), which is called *hladini-sakti*.

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Our happiness as jivas who don't practice bhakti is defined by the absence of misery.

Many philosophers say that this is the goal of life: to avoid misery.

But actually, this is THE NATURAL STATE of the jiva. It is not influenced by maya. We only think that we are influenced because we identify with the body, made of material nature.

Ananda here means lack of misery and not the ananda which is the outcome or the svarupa of bhakti, bhakti being the essence of the samvit and hladini potency.

Sadhaka:

So, there are different types of ananda (happiness)?

Gurudeva:

Ananda (happiness) is of various types such as - martyanada, brahmananda, and bhaktyananda.

Martyanada is the material happiness, brahmananda is freedom from material misery, and bliss of being in one's svarupa identified with Brahman and bhaktyananda is the bliss which is experienced by a devotee (asraya of prema) in relation to the visaya of prema, meaning by giving pleasure to Krishna.

Again, in Paramatma Sandarbha, section 28, Sri Jiva Gosvami clearly says that when it is said that the jiva is 'jnana svarupa' it means that it is not inert (not that it is full knowledge) and when it is said 'ananda svarupa', it means it is devoid of misery.

Tatra tasya jada-pratiyogitvena jnanatvam duhkha-

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pratiyogitvena tu jnanatvam anandatvam ca.

Then he further says that anandatvam means that the soul is the object of love without any condition. anandatvam ca nirupadhi.premaspadatvena sadhayati
tasmat priyatama...

(SB 10.14.54)

As soon as the jiva turns towards BHAKTI, the svarupa-sakti of the Lord starts to fill up the heart of the jiva and the more we progress in bhakti, the more of that hladini-sakti will fill our soul. This is the most wonderful mercy of Sri Krishna. He lets us have an eternal relationship with Him in the 5 RASAS. But first we need to receive the bhakti-lata-bija. Then we can start with our bhakti.

Sadhaka:

Dear Gurudeva, I am overwhelmed with gratitude. What you are saying enlightens my foolish heart.

How merciful is Krishna that we as jivas can receive this most wonderful gift of BHAKTI which makes us able to enter an eternal relationship with the Divine Couple.

So essentially, you are saying that bhakti is not dormant/inherent in the svarupa of the jiva and also the sat-cit-ananda of the jiva is of a different nature than the sat-cit-ananda of Krishna and His eternal associates.

What about our eternal spiritual form? Is this form inherent in the jiva or not?

According to what I now heard from you, it surely cannot be inherent in the svarupa of the jiva.

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Gurudeva:

Yes. The eternal spiritual form is not inherent in the svarupa of the jīva. The spiritual form is of svarupa-sakti. It is not of tatastha-sakti and therefore can never "reside" as a seed in the svarupa of the jīva.

In the tenth section of the Pṛiti-sandarbha, Jīva Gosvamin writes, commenting on the verse from above:

vaikunthasya bhagavato jyotir-amśa-bhūtā vaikuntha-loka-śobha-rūpā yā anantā mūrtayas tatra vartante tāsām ekayā saha muktasyaikasya mūrtir bhagavatā kriyata iti vaikuntasya mūrtir iva mūrtir yesām ity uktam
- (Pṛiti Sandarbha (10)

"In the spiritual world, the Supreme Lord has unlimited spiritual forms, all are expansions of himself illuminating that world. With each one of those forms, the Lord enjoys pastimes with a single individual liberated soul."

These liberated souls therefore have spiritual bodies like that of the Lord. In the Lord's abode, there are an unlimited number of forms, all suitable for rendering service to him. Every one of those forms is non-different from him, being expanded from his effulgence; each one is eternal, full of consciousness and bliss. They are the crowning, central jewels of the spiritual world—its very life. These unlimited spiritual bodies are the perfected forms of the liberated souls which are awarded to an individual, according to his taste, when he reaches the state of absolute liberation. This state is called attainment of the spiritual body.

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All these spiritual bodies are eternal for they exist even before the liberated souls enter them and will continue to exist ever afterward. However, prior to the entry of the liberated soul they are in an inactive state.

As all of the unlimited souls are servants of the Lord, each one of them has a spiritual body in the Lord's abode just suitable for rendering service to the Lord. When an individual becomes qualified for direct service to the Lord by the grace of the Goddess of Devotion, then the Supreme Lord awards him that spiritual body.

Now, it is very important to check the verse in question very clearly.

Srila Jiva Goswami writes that Krishna will GIVE a liberated soul who reached perfection a body "similar" to His. Many think that He "creates that form", but this is not the case.

The siddha-deha is an eternally existing form. It is never created and it is "of pure svarupa-sakti". Srila Jiva Goswami uses his words very thoughtfully.

He clearly says: KRIYATE. "KRIYATE" can mean many things.

Sadhaka:

So, when I reach perfection in my bhakti, Krishna will "reward" me with such a marvellous gift?

Gurudeva:

Yes.

We can clearly see that this form is "already" there and

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Krishna "assigns" (KRIYATE) such a form to the jiva who reached perfection.

The eternal spiritual form can never be "in a seed-like" state like you mentioned in the beginning. It cannot "grow". It is eternally there. Like I said, no sastra has used the seed-analogy in reference to the svarupa of the jiva and the eternal spiritual form.

Also, if the spiritual form would be eternally inherent in our svarupa as a jiva, what happens to those jivas who attain brahma-sayujya mukta?

If the svarupa is ever present in the soul but concealed by ignorance, then what happens to those who attain Brahma-sayujya mukti?

Their ignorance is removed, otherwise it cannot be called mukti. Then a Brahma-sayujya mukta should also have a spiritual form. But if they have spiritual form it cannot be called Brahma-sayujya.

Sadhaka:

So this means that every jiva has the possibility to attain any of the 5 relationships with Krishna through bhakti?

Gurudeva:

Theoretically, yes. But actually, bhakti is very rarely given. In the Srimad Bhagavatam we find this verse:

muktānām api siddhānām nārāyana parāyana
sudurlabhabhā prasāntātmā kotisvapi mahāmune

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'Among millions of liberated souls, a devotee of Nārāyan is very rare.'

Sadhaka:

But we are raganuga-bhaktas and we don't worship Laksmi-Narayana...

Gurudeva:

You see? A Krishna-devotee is even rarer to be found...

What to speak of a devotee who wants to follow the eternal inhabitants of Vrindavana to attain the same love they have for Sri Krishna?

But basically, in theory, yes, every jīva can attain one of these 5 RASAS.

All depends on the mercy of Krishna and of Bhakti-devi and on the association we choose to practice bhakti...

We know that actually bhakti originates in Srimati Radhika.

So in this Kali-Yuga right now, we have the incredible fortune to attain the highest rasa possible for the jīva. By Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mercy, we can all become maid-servants of Srimati Radhika. This is what Mahaprabhu came to give to us fallen jivas.

anarpita-carim cirat karunayavatirnah kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasam sva-bhakti-sriyam
harih purata-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandipitah
sada hridaya-kandare sphuratu vah saci-nandanah

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May the Supreme Lord who is known as the son
of Srimati Saci-devi
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 has ever offered before:
the most sublime and radiant mellow of devotional service,
the mellow of conjugal love.

Sadhaka:

This seems to be a very high thing to be attained...conjugal
love...am I qualified for such a devotion?

Gurudeva:

There is only one price to pay for this kind of devotion:
greed, eagerness...lobha in Sanskrit.
When we hear about the pastimes of Radha and Krishna in
Vrindavana, this greed will awaken in our hearts.
For this, we need always be in the shelter of Sri Gurudeva
and the Vaishnavas.

We are very very fortunate.
Therefore it is also very important to always be in sajati-
sanga (like-minded association).
Try to avoid being with people who are not like-minded.

Nowadays, Kali Yuga is very powerful and it is very hard to
find like-minded devotees who share the same goal.
Everyone wants to claim the ABSOLUTE TRUTH.

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Don't engage in these discussions. It will only lead to aparadhas, offences.

Try to avoid all activities which present an obstacle to your bhakti.

I know that you like to discuss and debate, but more often it is controlled by your false ego.

Go deep into your bhajan. All realization will come. I told you now what my Gurudeva told me and what his Gurudeva told him.

Don't try to impose anything to anyone.

If someone asks you a question, if someone wants to know something and is interested, always be careful of your own motivation and of the attitude of the person approaching you.

It is better to be quiet than to disturb the faith of another person.

Sadhaka:

Thank you, dear Gurudeva for these clear words.

I will embed them fully in my heart.

Radhe Radhe!

Gurudeva:

Always know that I am with you. We are NEVER separated. You are never alone.

My blessings to you.

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This is a fictional discussion.

I just wanted to say that I incorporated, sometimes even verbatim, the wonderful teachings about "jiva-tattva" which I read and heard from my dear friend Advaita das, from the very learned scholar, Sripad Satya Narayana das Babaji and most of all from my beloved Gurudeva, Srila Ananta das Babaji. Without their words, this would not have been possible to write.

My heart goes out to these wonderful souls.

Advaita dasa's blog

Satya Narayan Das Babaji's blog

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3. The “way out” - **bhakti yoga** **(abhidheya-tattva)**

Like mentioned before, Srila Sanatana Goswami asked this question for the welfare of all souls and afterwards, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu instructs him on this very important topic.

“Who am I? Why do the threefold miseries always give me trouble?”

If I do not know this, how can I be benefited?
Everybody should understand who we really are. We all have forgotten our relationship with God. That is our greatest mistake. It is our duty to realize our true selves. To do this, we need to know about our relationship which we have with Krishna.

It is all about relationship. A son is related to his father, a mother is related to her daughter. Without relationship there can be no love. When we know our relationship with Krishna, we can truly start to love Him.

We are here in this world to practice this through LOVE IN ACTION.

All our relationships here in this world help us to be fixed in our eternal relationship with Sri Sri Radha Krishna. We can start with loving relationships right here in this world, in our daily life, because Krishna dwells in every living entity.

Unfortunately, the living entity has forgotten his relationship with Krishna:

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krishna bhuli' sei jiva anadi-bahirmukha
ataeva maya tare deya samsara-duhkha
- CC Madhya 20.117

“Forgetting Krishna, the living entity has been attracted by the external feature from time immemorial. Therefore the illusory energy gives him all kinds of misery in his material existence.”

Although we are here in this material world since beginningless time, by the mercy of Krishna, the living entity, the soul, can experience five different kinds of relationships with Him.

- 1) Neutral relationship (santa-rasa)
- 2) Servitude relationship (dasya-rasa)
- 3) Friendly relationship (sakhya-rasa)
- 4) Parental relationship (vatsalya-rasa)
- 5) Amorous relationship (madhurya-rasa)

When by the grace of Krishna we encounter holy people (sadhus) and when they teach us the answers to all our questions, we can start **PRACTICING** spiritual life. This is called **bhakti-yoga**, serving Krishna with love and devotion.

What is bhakti?

When Rishis such as Sanaka Muni asked this question, the Gopal-Tapani Shruti answered –

“bhaktirasya bhajanam tadiham-utra-upadhi-nairasyena amusmin manah kalpanam- etad-eava hi naishkarmyam.”

Meaning -

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"Bhakti means 'to serve Sri Bhagavan'. When we are free of all material desires and engage our mind and all the senses in serving Sri Bhagavan, we call it 'bhajan' and this bhajan alone is 'naishkarmya'."

These words of the Shruti prove that bhajan and naishkarmya are synonymous. It expresses the truth that when we begin bhajan all our material desires are destroyed and our heart becomes immaculate. We simply get drowned in relishing the seva-ras of Sri Bhagavan. The Tapani Shruti has defined bhakti and how bhakti subjugates Sri Krishna.

It says – "vignana-ghana ananda-ghana sachchidanandaika-rase bhakti-yoge tishthati."

Meaning -

"Sri Krishna is intense special knowledge personified. He is revealed through bhakti-yoga that is eternal, conscious, and blissful rasa."

From the above statement we learn three things –

- What is bhakti – it is eternal, conscious and blissful rasa*
- What does bhakti do – it reveals Sri Krishna, which means that He is under the control of bhakti*
- Sri Bhagavan's original form – intense special knowledge*

Sri Narada-Pancha-Ratra says –

*"surarshe vibita shastre harim-uddishya ya kriya,
saiwa bhaktir-iti prokta taya bhakti para bhavet."*

Meaning -

"Bhakti comprises all the activities we perform to serve Sri Krishna. By performing these activities we gain supreme bhakti called prem."

Here, 'all the activities we perform to serve Sri Krishna' means the actions that please Him such as, hearing, glorifying etc. Bhakti originates from the root word 'bhaj'.

- bhaj ityesha vai dhatuh sevayam parikirtitah-*

Meaning -

"The root word 'bhaj' means 'seva'." – (Garuda Purana)

However we should note that, if we perform bhajan with any desire

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*other than pleasing Sri Bhagavan, we shall not gain eternal love.
(Srila Ananta das Babaji – Bhakti tattva vijnana)*

In the Srimad Bhagavatam we find the following verse:

sa vai pumśām̄ paro dharmo
yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
ahaituky apratihatā
yayātmā suprasīdati

The supreme occupation (dharma) for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self.

Sri Prahlada Maharaja informs us:

śravaṇam̄ kīrtanam̄ viṣṇoḥ
smaraṇam̄ pāda-sevanam̄
arcanaṁ vandanam̄ dāsyam̄
sakhyam̄ ātma-nivedanam̄
iti pumśārpitā viṣṇau
bhaktiś cen nava-lakṣaṇā
kriyeta bhagavaty addhā
tan manye 'dhītam uttamam̄

“Hearing and chanting about the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes of Lord Visnu, 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

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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 Krsna through these nine methods should be understood to be the most learned person, for he has acquired complete knowledge.”

- Srimad Bhagavatam (7.5.23-24)

So here we find nine processes – nine items on the “to-do-list”.

This “what-we-have-to-do” is called “abhidheya-jnana”. The knowledge of “abhidheya” helps us to come “out” of our bodily conception of life.

We all identify with our material bodies and therefore we suffer.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu instructed **Srila Rupa Goswami** to write books about and elaborate on the subject of “abhidheya-tattva”, the knowledge of the way to achieve our goal, prema-bhakti.

Our goal is to come out of our body-life and to start a loving relationship with Sri Sri Radha Krishna with all our heart and soul.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu came to give us this highest love and to take us by the hand to lead us in this direction.

He did this through Srila Rupa Goswami.

Srila Sanatana Goswami told us about who we are and what our relationship to Sri Sri Radha Krishna is and now we can follow Srila Rupa Goswami and be on our path to pure love, prema-bhakti.

Srila Rupa Goswami surrendered wholeheartedly to this task and honestly, without him, we would not be able to know about our highest goal and more importantly HOW to achieve it. Without Srila Rupa Goswami, bhakti-yoga

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(LOVE IN ACTION) would not have been accessible for us living entities in such a wonderful and astonishing way. He wrote many books, but two works stand out:

- **Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu** (The nectarocean of divine devotion)
- **Sri Ujjvala nilamani** (The splendid sapphire of the highest love)

In Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu, Srila Rupa Goswami writes about all there is to know in bhakti-yoga and how we can achieve our highest goal, pure love to Sri Sri Radha Krishna (prema-bhakti). When we read his words our spiritual lives are enriched by the knowledge about the definition of bhakti.

Srila Rupa Goswami lists in this masterpiece 64 items of bhakti-yoga. He starts the list with the most important items:

guru-padashrayas tasmat
krishna-dikshadi-shikshanam
vishrambhena guroh seva
sadhu vartanuvartamanam
- Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu (1.2.74)

"Accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master, becoming initiated by the spiritual master and learning how to discharge devotional service from him, obeying the orders of the spiritual master with faith and devotion, and following in the footsteps of great acaryas [teachers] under the direction of the spiritual master".

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Now, this bhakti is a very mysterious energy. It is a combination of two energies of Krishna. Bhakti is "made of" samvit-sakti (knowledge/realization) and hladini-sakti (bliss). Ultimately bhakti rests in the heart of the personification of Krishna's innermost energy, Srimati Radharani.

This bhakti is not originally in the "heart" of the living entity. Bhakti is "originating" from Krishna's innermost energy and the spiritual soul is from the marginal energy. So by definition, bhakti cannot be "already" in the heart of the spiritual soul.

BUT: The spiritual soul has the "potency" to love. We can love through our false ego and we can love through our real ego, the drop of spiritual consciousness.

When this spiritual drop of consciousness (the spiritual soul) comes into contact with the bhakti-energy, the soul will be on the path to realize where it really belongs to.

Bhakti can only be received from someone who has already received bhakti. It is said that bhakti flows down from the spiritual world (Krishna's inner energy) to the material realm through the riverbed of an unbroken Guru-parampara.

Now Guru-tattva comes into play.

When the devotee finds his or her Gurudeva and the devotee matures more and more and his/her inner bhajan becomes more and more intense and the heart purer and purer, then the "ability" to "pass on" this pure bhakti awakens in him/her and so he/she too can give this loving energy to his/her students/disciples.

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brahmaṇa bhramite kona bhagyavan jīva
guru kṛṣṇa prasade paya bhakti-lata-bija
- CC

"By the causeless mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa, the devotee can receive the seed of bhakti by the mercy of Gurudeva." This means PLANTING the seed and it takes place at the moment of initiation.

divyam jñānam hy atra mantre bhagavat-svarūpa-jñānam,
tena bhagavatā sambandha-viṣesa-jñānañ ca
- Bhakti-sandarbha, Anuccheda 283

"Divya-jñāna is transcendental knowledge contained within a mantra which reveals the form and identity of the Supreme Lord (bhagavat-svarūpa) as well as knowledge of the sādhaka-jīva's particular relationship with the Lord."

dīksā-kāle bhakta kare ātma-samarpana
sei-kāle krishna tāre kare ātma-sama
sei deha kare tāra cid-ānanda maya
aprākrita-dehe tantra carana bhajaya
- CC Antya-lila 4.192-3

"At the time of initiation, when a sādhaka fully surrenders to Śrī Guru, Kṛṣṇa makes him like Himself. He transforms the devotee's body into a spiritual one; the sādhaka then worships the Lord in that spiritualized body."

Here we see that at the time of initiation (diksha), the spiritual drop of consciousness, the atma, will start to transform "into a spiritual body".

Therefore the concept of an unbroken diksha-parampara,

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one Gurudeva after the other, is very much important. This will be analysed in a separate chapter later on.

So planting the seed is an activity, not a process.

Srila Gurudeva plants the seed of BHAKTI in our heart, so that the drop of spiritual consciousness will be able to IDENTIFY and finally REALIZE its eternal, Krishna-given form, which is already THERE, in the spiritual world. This is the final goal which will be dealt with in the last chapter.

Everything happens only by the mercy of our beloved Gurudeva (Guru-kripa) and by our greed to reach that most wonderful goal.

yasya prasadad bhagavat-prasado
yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto 'pi
dhyayan stuvams tasya yashas trisandhyam
vande guroh sri-charanaravindam
- Sri Gurvastakam

“By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Krsna. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement. Therefore, I should always remember and praise the spiritual master. At least three times a day I should offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master.”

Srila Rupa Goswami gives us a most wonderful definition of bhakti:

anyabhilasita-sunyam
jnana-karmady-anavritam

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anukulyena krishnanu-
silanam bhaktir uttama

“One should render transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord **Krsna** favourably and without desire for material profit or gain through fruitive activities or philosophical speculation. That is called pure devotional service.”

In this verse Srila Rupa Goswami clearly says what actually pure bhakti means.

Srila Jiva Goswami comments on this verse and he especially puts emphasis on the main characteristics which define pure bhakti:

- **Anusilanam**

“Anusilanam” means “continuous, uninterrupted loving service”.

When we start our bhakti-life, we practice “sadhana-bhakti”. We do actions to serve Krishna. Out of love and out of free will we carefully observe regulations which bring us closer to the Lord.

These actions we do by body, mind, and words. This kind of bhakti is called cesta-rupa-bhakti (performing all kinds of loving actions for Krishna). When our consciousness becomes more pure, we will experience wonderful emotions and feelings (moods) during our bhakti-life. We progress onwards to bhava-rupa-bhakti. What in the beginning have been actions in a kind of “mechanical” way now turn into loving service with deeply felt emotions (anubhavas). Srila Rupa Goswami adds the word Krishna to “anusilanam”.

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So we then have the word “Krishnanusilanam”. All our continuous, loving service throughout the stages of bhakti should be directed to Krishna and His loved ones.

- **Anukulyena**

These loving actions should be performed with a behaviour FAVOURABLE to Krishna. We should please Him in a very friendly mood towards Him. This is called the MAIN CHARACTERISTIC of pure bhakti. We should do everything with a most loving attitude towards Krishna.

- **Anyabhilasita-sunyam and jñana-karmady-anavrtam**

Our efforts to please Sri Krishna in a favourable and friendly mood should be free of other desires, dwelling in the back of our minds, than LOVE FOR GOD.

And our loving service should be free of the desire for knowledge about the impersonal form of God and free of the desire for knowledge about karma-yoga (like: How to do good things to enter the heavenly planets?).

We should only be concerned about the knowledge which helps us to love Krishna and about the actions which bring us nearer to Him. These are the SECONDARY CHARACTERISTICS. In this way, Srila Rupa Goswami's famous verse about the definition of pure bhakti is explained by Srila Jiva Goswami.

Srila Rupa Goswami writes about mainly five extremely wonderful characteristics of bhakti-yoga.

When we perform bhakti-yoga and when we progress on the path these unique characteristics will be experienced in our soul:

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- **Our suffering in this material world will come to an end.**

What kind of suffering will come to an end?

1. Reactions to our bad deeds (in this life or in previous lives)
2. The seed of these bad deeds (unwanted and extremely selfish, material ego-desires)
3. Our ignorance about our true self.

- **The path of bhakti will bring auspiciousness into our lives.**

Namely of four types:

1. Deep affection for all living beings
2. Being loved by all living beings
3. Possession of good qualities
4. Happiness on the platform of the soul

- **Disregard for liberation**

When we progress on our way in bhakti-yoga, the four goals of human life (pleasure, wealth, liberation, religious profit) will become completely insignificant because the real wealth is the fifth goal of human life: our goal, prema-bhakti.

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- **Bhakti is rarely attained**

We should always try to perform bhakti-yoga with loving attachment to Sri Krishna.

And we should always be conscious of our dependency on His mercy.

- **Concentrated bliss**

When we progress further and further in bhakti-yoga, we will go through the stages of firm steadiness (nistha) and we will reach the stages of affection and taste (rucī). From rucī we will develop extremely deep attraction to Sri Sri Radha Krishna (asakti), so much so that our true self will be bathed in the nectar of love at every further step and we will feel concentrated bliss.

There are different stages on the path of bhakti:

1. Sraddha

Sraddha, or faith, is the first step of the aspirant of bhakti on his or her journey.

Sraddha means to have firm faith in the revealed scriptures, which deal with the subject of bhakti.

Sraddha also means the joyful endeavour to very carefully and attentively follow the process of bhakti like it is documented in the scriptures. Sraddha can be caused by natural and spontaneous attraction or by forceful imposition of the written word. Sraddha of the

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spontaneous and natural kind is born in the association of sadhus. Forcefully imposed faith is caused by blindly following and imitating.

2. Sadhu-Sanga:

‘Sanga’ means serving the sadhus, hearing Sri Krishna-katha from them, behaving as they behave, glorifying them – and be engrossed in serving them with body, speech and mind – this is sadhusanga.

Then amongst these sadhus we may meet someone whose shelter we sincerely; he becomes our Sri Gurudeva.

We should take diksha (mantra-initiation) and shiksha (spiritual advices) from him.

3. Bhajana-kriya:

Now we start hearing, glorifying, arcanam, vandandam etc. Bhajan-kriya is of two types

1. - **not firm**
2. - **firm**

In the beginning stages our bhajan (worship) is not firm. We have to cross a few hurdles before our bhajan becomes firm. When a devotee who has sraddha takes initiation from a real Sri Gurudeva, and by his mercy starts bhajan, he is highly enthusiastic.

He is always eager to practice devotional actions. So we call this stage as **utsahamayi** or ‘**enthusiastic**’. However this state does not remain long.

Within a short time we find our eagerness webbing. We feel

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bored and our worship suffers a ‘low tide’. Sometimes our bhakti is intense and at other times it is slack. Therefore the wise call this state an ‘**intense-slack**’ period.

During this time we get many ideas, such as – I shall leave my family and practice bhakti in seclusion or I will practice bhakti as a householder or out of hearing, glorifying etc.

I will practice only one item of bhakti or I will practice all of them etc. etc. Therefore we also call this state as **vyudha-vikalpa** or ‘**alternate ideas**’. In this stage we have to literally fight with our materialistic tendencies. Sometimes we win and at other times material desires get the better of us. Since this continues, we call it the **vishay-sangara** or ‘**material association**’ state.

Devotional practice should force our material desires to wane and increase our love. However if it does not happen we should realize that it is because we are not following the advices of bhakti properly (as given by Srila Rupa Goswami).

Therefore we also call this state as **niyamakshama** – ‘**unable to follow rules**’. When we practice bhakti, sometimes people are drawn to us; then temptations such as monetary gain, power, and position appear on our path. These are the parasitic creepers growing on the Bhaktikalpa-lata (bhakti is like a divine creeper that can fulfil all the wishes of a devotee).

Therefore it is our duty to sever them first and become steady in our loving service.

4. Anartha-nivritti:

Anartha-nivritti means „getting rid of bad qualities“.

When we are not firm in bhajan, our anarthas (unwanted

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material obstacles) force us to slip down the ladder of bhakti. Unwanted things are of four types –

1. Those arising from bad actions – these unfavourable things arise from past and recent bad activities.
2. Those arising of pious actions – the pious activities we have performed in the past grant us a rich lifestyle. This absorbs us in sense-gratification and causes anarthas.
3. Those arising from aparadhas – Offenses against the Holy Name and against spiritual souls
4. Those arising from bhakti – When we advance in bhakti we may get money, fame and power. This gives rise to anarthas. Thus bhakti too can cause bad qualities if we are not careful.

What are the external symptoms that tell us we have got rid of all unwanted things?

When we lack the following –

1. **Laya** – we feel sleepy while chanting the Mahamantra, while hearing and while meditating.
2. **Vikshepa** – when we conduct worldly matters during hearing, glorifying etc. we call it ‘vikshepa’.
3. **Apratipatti** – even though we may lack laya and vikshepa, sometimes we do not feel like hearing or glorifying – this is ‘apratipatti’.

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4. **Kashaya** – While doing bhakti such as hearing etc. if we get negative feelings such as anger, greed, pride – it is called ‘kashaya’.
5. **Rasaswada** – if we are unable to concentrate on hearing etc. because our mind is dwelling on material pleasures or attachments, it is called ‘rasaswada’.

5. Nistha:

This is the stage of firm bhajan. “How do we decide whether our bhajan is ‘not firm’ or ‘firm’?

1. When we are lax in hearing, glorifying etc. we are not firm, and when we are strong in these activities we are ‘firm’.”
2. When we become devoid of the five symptoms of anarthas as mentioned above, then we can say we have become ‘firm in bhajan’ or we have gained ‘nishtha’.

6. Ruci:

When we relish the sweetness of Sri Krishna’s name, beauty, qualities, pastimes, and associates we have reached the state of ‘rucī’.

7. Asakti:

“When our ruci (interest) in bhakti-actions becomes extremely intense and our thoughts keep roaming around Sri Krishna alone, then this stage is called ‘asakti’. The

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process of bhakti-yoga is like a gracious wish-fulfilling creeper on which asakti blooms like a cluster of buds that burst into the colorful flowers of bhava (asakti gives rise to bhava) that finally turns into prema (the fruit).”¹
(Madhurya Kadambini, 6th shower)

8. Bhava or rati:

We have glimpses into the Divine Play and we are filled with Divine Love. Srila Rupa Goswami describes nine symptoms of this stage –

1. We are not disturbed by anything.
2. No second we want to live without bhakti.
3. No interest in things not related to Krishna.
4. Free from the false ego.
5. Unshakable firm faith in the mercy of Krishna.
6. Great longing to be with Krishna.
7. Always eager to chant the Holy Name.
8. Always eager to glorify Krishna.
9. Extremely eager to live in Vrindavana.

9. Prema:

Pure love to the Divine Couple, Sri Sri Radha Krishna; this pure love has the power to conquer Their hearts. It is like gold molten a million times.

“If Srila Rupa Goswami had not appeared in Kali-yuga, who would have opened the great store-house of Vraja-prema and distributed its contents freely? Just as a swan separates milk from water, who else could have separated

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the rasas to taste them? Abandoning everything, he performed bhajana in Vrindavan and wrote his rasika literatures. He lived like a bee taking the nectar of lotuses. Who could have understood the nectar he was collecting? Who could have understood Krishna's pastimes in Mathura and Vrindavan? How could we have known the sweet vraja-lilas and the love between Radha and Madhava (another name of Sri Krishna, meaning the husband or beloved of the supreme goddess of fortune)? By the mercy of his lotus feet, all can sing about and attain such divine bliss. The surrendered Madhava Das is always praying to embrace Sri Rupa's glories."

- (Yadi kali rupa sarira na dharata, by Madhava Das)

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4. The concept of a line of teachers (guru-parampara)

Earlier it was mentioned -

“Bhakti can only be received from someone who has already received bhakti. It is said that bhakti flows down from the spiritual world (Krishna’s inner energy) to the material realm through the riverbed of an unbroken Guru-parampara.”

To receive the seed of bhakti, the bhakti-lata-bija, we need to be properly initiated in a lineage of Gurudevas who received their seed of bhakti from their Gurudevas.

Krishna again tells us in the Gita what we can do to speed up that process of inquiry:

tad viddhi pranipatena
pariprasnena sevaya
upadeksyanti te jnanam
jnanimas tattva-darsinah

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.”

So a true spiritual master will impart this knowledge to us.

Inherent in the jiva is the potency to receive the ability to love Radha and Krishna in the highest way possible (by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhus mercy).

Krishna loves nothing more than when we wake up and start to look for Him.

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brahmaṇda bhramite kona bhagyavan jīva
guru-krishna-prasade paya bhakti-lata-bija

"According to their karma, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe. Some of them are being elevated to the upper planetary systems, and some are going down into the lower planetary systems. Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Krishna. By the mercy of both Krishna and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service."

All is depending on our will to search for Krishna, but mostly on the mercy of Him.
By His mercy, we will find a true Gurudeva.

Like mentioned earlier, this bhakti-lata-bija, the seed of bhakti, is not in our hearts. The jīva only has the capacity to receive this seed.

So Srila Gurudeva is planting that seed in our heart.
How is he doing that?

This is arranged by the process of diksha-initiation by Sri Gurudeva, who received his own diksha-initiation from his Gurudeva, who received his own diksha-initiation from his Gurudeva and so on.

We will soon come to that very important "transaction of divine knowledge".

First it is important to know who a true Gurudeva is.
Krishna says: "a self-realized soul."

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When the Guru-potency awakens within a saint he becomes known as a bona fide Guru. This Guru-potency awakens within a saint in the following way:

those who have removed the dirt from their hearts through their practice of sadhana- bhajana and in whose hearts bhakti has awakened and who have become ornamented by saintly qualities such as compassion and kindness - their hearts melt when they see the misery the conditioned souls go through in the material world of maya. By instructing the conditioned souls in the practice of bhajana, they destroy their miserable condition and they are eager to bless them by giving them the relish of bhakti-rasa.

By the Lord's wish, the Guru-potency emanates from Him and appears within the hearts of such bhakti-siddha-mahapurushas (His pure devotees).

A person who covets devotion to the Supreme Lord is blessed by taking shelter of such a qualified and bona fide Guru. The characteristics of such a bona fide Guru have been described in Srimad Bhagavata (11.3.21) —

*tasmad gurum prapadyeta jijnasuh sreyah uttamam
sabde pare ca nishnatam brahmanyupasamasrayam*

"Therefore a person who inquires about the highest welfare should take shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide Guru, who is sabda-brahma and para-brahma-nishnata and upasamasraya or free from lust and greed."

Sridhara Svami writes in his commentary on this verse:

*sabde brahmani vedakhye nyayato nishnatam tattvajnam. anyatha
samsaya nirasadkatrayogat. pare ca brahmani aparamokshanubhavena
nishnatam. anyatha bodha sancarayogat. para brahma nishnatatva
dyotakam abha upasamasrayam iti*

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"That the bona fide Guru is sabda brahma nishnata means that he is a knower of the Vedic literature and a knower of the truth. If he is not, then he cannot remove the doubts of the disciples that take shelter of him. Then again he is para-brahma-nishnata, which means that He is a devotee, or that He is endowed with transcendental realisations about Sri Krishna. If he is not, then he cannot infuse realisations on bhajana within the heart of his disciple."

- (Srila Ananta das Babaji, Sri Guru-tattva-vijnana)

Here we learn a lot about how a highly elevated soul becomes Sri Gurudeva.

Such a true Gurudeva, in whose heart the light of pure bhakti shines, can give this pure bhakti to a disciple.

It is important to note that we also learn how bhakti comes to this world.

Bhakti only come from bhakti. This means: only someone who HAS bhakti in his heart can give bhakti to someone else.

According to the srutis, the self-satisfied Lord cannot be attracted by any material object, nor can one consider bhakti as the svarupananda, or the bliss existing in the eternal form of the Lord, as accepted by the non-personalists. The Lord enjoys the bliss derived from bhakti (bhaktyananda) more than the bliss arising from his own svarupa (svarupananda). Nor can one consider bhakti as the bliss existing in the eternal form of the jiva since the bliss of jivananda is extremely minute. It is thus unable to overwhelm the Lord.

The Vishnu Purana (1.12.69) says, "The three eternal energies, namely, bladini, sandhini and samvit exist in the svarupa of Bhagavan, the possessor of all energies. O Lord! Being completely free from the three modes of nature, the material modes namely, happiness (sattviki), misery (tamasi), and the mixture of both (rajas) do not exist in Your svarupa." This text clearly suggests that bhakti is neither svarupananda nor jivananda.

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The only bliss which thus remains is that arising from the hladini-sakti of the Lord (svarupa-saktyananda).

It is this hladini-sakti only that overwhelms the Lord with ecstasy. By this sakti the Lord Himself attains bliss and bestows bliss to his devotees.

The supremely blissful state of hladini that eternally exists in the devotees is known as bhagavat-priti, or divine prema. The Lord can also experience this within His devotees and thus the Lord and His devotees become attached to each other.

Bhakti is called the svarupa-sakti of the Lord. The Lord's svarupa is sat cit ananda, so His cit-sakti has also three features, sandhini, samvit, and hladini.

Sandhini is the energy related to existence. By this energy the Lord maintains His own existence and that of others. Samvit is the energy related to knowledge. Through this energy the Lord knows about Himself and causes others to know Him. Hladini is the energy related to bliss. By this energy the Lord Himself experiences bliss and gives bliss to others.

Existing within the svarupa of the Lord, eternity (sat), knowledge (cit), and bliss (ananda) cannot be separated from each other.

Sandhini, samvit, and hladini are similarly inseparable. In any manifestation of svarupa-sakti, one of these three states is predominant, while the other two are also present in lesser quantity. As cit-sakti is self-manifested, its three states are also self-manifesting. They make their appearance by themselves and cause the appearance of others.

By the specific self-manifesting state of cit-sakti consisting of hladini, sandhini, and samvit, the Lord appears in His original eternal form along with His associates and transcendental abode.

This specific state of svarupa-sakti is known as visuddha-sattva.

When sandhini-sakti predominates in visuddha-sattva it is known as adhara-sakti, the energy holding all existence. The abode of the Lord and the Lord's associates appear by this energy.

When samvit-sakti predominates, it is known as atmavidya, spiritual

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*knowledge. When *hladini* predominates, it is known as *guhya-vidya*, secret knowledge. By this energy *bhakti*, or *bhagavat-priti*, love for the Lord, is manifest.*

*One can thus understand from this description, that *bhakti* is self-manifesting by nature like the Lord. There is no other cause for her appearance.*

Bhakti manifests herself in the devotee by her own independent will. *sadhana-bhajana* is performed to make the heart suitable for her appearance.

*The author gives further evidence from the Bhagavata to establish the independent appearance of *bhakti*. In the beginning of Srimad-Bhagavata (1.2.6) while establishing the ultimate welfare of the living entities, Sripada Suta Muni says to the sages headed by Saunaka Rishi,*

*- sa vai pumsam paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokshaje
abaituky apratibhata yayatma suprasidati*

*"The supreme religion of all living beings is that by which they can attain causeless and uninterrupted *bhakti* to the Lord, who is beyond the reach of the material senses."*

*The word *abaituki* means that *bhakti* is causeless. This means *bhakti* is self-blissful; it does not seek any other fruit except the Lord and His service. This explanation shows the causeless appearance of *bhakti*.*

- (Srila Ananta das Babaji, commentary on Madhurya-kadambini).

So Srila Gurudeva can impart this *bhakti* into our hearts. How? By the process of giving us the *diksha-mantras*, which is called "diksha-initiation". He received those mantras from his line of gurus

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(parampara) and he will never add nor subtract anything. The disciple gets the "original".

Here we find a wonderful explanation of the process of diksha-initiation:

What is meant with diksha, or initiation?

In his Bhakti Sandarbha (283) Srimat Jiva Gosvamipada quotes the sastras to describe the glories of initiation -

*divyam jnanam yato dadyat kuryat papasya sankshayam
tasmad diksheti sa prokta desikais tattva kovidaih*

"That which bestows divine knowledge and destroys all sins is called diksha by the acaryas who know the truth." Sri Jivapada adds:

*divyam jnanam hyatra srimati mantre bhagavat svarupa jnanam tena
bhagavata sambandha visesha jnanam ca — "Here divine knowledge
means the knowledge about the Lord's intrinsic identity which lies
within the mantra, along with specific knowledge of the living being's
relationship with the Lord."*

*jivera svarupa hoy — krishnera nitya dasa
krishnera tatatastra sakti — bhedabhedha prakasa
(C.C.)*

*"The intrinsic identity of the living entity is that he is Krishna's
eternal servant. Being Krishna's marginal potency he is both different
and non-different from Him."*

*Although the living being is Krishna's eternal servant, he has been
averse to the Lord since beginningless time. Hence he has been
swallowed by ignorance and illusion, and being under such illusion, he
identifies with his false body, senses and mind. Forgetting his own
intrinsic identity he calls his false body "I" and forgetting his eternal*

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relationship with Sri Hari, he becomes bound to his wife, children, and money.

*krishna nitya dasa jiva taha bhuli gelo;
sei doshe maya tara golaya bandhilo*
(C.C.)

"The living being has forgotten that he is Krishna's eternal servant, and due to that fault maya has bound him around the neck."

In this way, although the living being is intrinsically a transcendental entity, he is bound by maya and wanders around in the miserable material world, reincarnating from one painful species of life to the other. That, through which Sri Guru mercifully slackens the bondage of maya and infuses transcendental energy into the disciple's heart, thus awaking his awareness of his eternal or special relationship with Sri Hari — is called diksha.

Then again the mantra is the intrinsic form of the Lord, and by the grace of the sadhus and the Guru, who are Sri Hari's karunya ghana vigraha, the embodiments of His deep mercy, the Lord enters into the disciple's heart in the form of the mantra to make his body, mind and life-airs transcendently suitable for serving the Lord.

Sriman Mahaprabhu Himself said —

*diksha kale bhakta kore atma samarpana;
sei kale krishna tate kore atma sama
sei deha korena tara cid anandamoy;
aprakrita dehe tara carana bhajoy*
(C.C.)

"At the time of initiation the devotee surrenders himself and at that time Krishna makes the practising devotee equal to Himself. The Lord then makes the devotee's body transcendental and in this

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transcendental body the devotee can worship the Lord's lotus feet."
(Srila Ananta das Babaji, Sri Guru-tattva-vijnana)

So, confirmed by Sriman Mahaprabhu, we see why it is of utter importance to take diksha-initiation. Everything is in these diksha-mantras, especially in the Krishna-mantra and the Kama-gayatri.

Sri Krishna Himself took diksha from Sandipani Muni. Sriman Mahaprabhu took diksha from Ishvara Puri. Nityananda Prabhu from Laksmipathi Tirtha, Sri Advaita Acarya from Madhavendra Puri and Gadadhara Pandit took diksha from Pundarik Vidyanidhi. All these eternal personalities are considered "Krishna-tattva" (one form of Krishna and Krishna Himself). So if all these persons took diksha-initiation, we should understand that is absolutely necessary to do it for ourselves.

Sriman Mahaprabhu instructed His closest followers to initiate disciples and to start disciplic successions (paramparas). Sriman Nityananda Prabhu ordered his wife Srimati Jahnava Ma to start initiating disciples. Advaita Acarya started, Gadadhara Pandit and many many more and even up to this day, still all of these paramparas are "intact" and completely unbroken. The divine gift of pure bhakti can still flow through these wonderful "channels". By this we see, how much Sri Krishna wants and facilitates the system of a parampara where divine knowledge is imparted through diksha-initiation.

Srila Rupa Goswami tells us the 64 "limbs (angas)" of bhakti:

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guru-padashrayas tasmat krsna-diksadi-siksanam
vishrambhena guroh seva sadhu-vartmanuvartanam 74

- (1) Submission to the Feet of the Guru (Spiritual Master);
- (2) Receiving training from him in spiritual initiation and practices regarding Sri Krishna; (3) serving the Spiritual Master with affectionate zeal; (4) Following in the path of saints

So we can see right there from the acarya for bhakti-yoga: "krishna-diksadi-siksanam".

Initiation into Krishna-mantra and receiving instructions (siksha).

Diksha-guru is ONE, siksha-guru can be many.

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5. The gift of Sriman Mahaprabhu - bhakti in the wake of the inhabitants of Vrindavana (raganuga-bhakti)

Sadhaka:

Gurudeva, can you tell us something about raganuga-bhakti?

Gurudeva:

Of course. It is my pleasure and my service to give to you what I have received.

The word “raganuga” literally means “to follow loving attachment”, love directed towards God. Like already mentioned above, we can love God in aishvarya-bhava and in madhurya-bhava. Now, to love Krishna like the inhabitants of Vrindavana, we have to clearly understand the path of raganuga-bhakti.

We follow (anuga) the perfected souls in Vraja, who have “this special kind of love” (raga) in their soul (atmika). We are raganuga-devotees, following the ragatmika-devotees in eternal Vrindavana. They are our “role models”.

The practice of bhakti is divided into two different paths.

vaidhi raganuga ceti sa dvidha sadhanabhidha (brs 1.2.5)

“Practice is of two kinds, namely vaidhi and raganuga.” The word “vaidhi” is derived from the Sanskrit word “vidhi”, referring to the commandments of the scriptures. The

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word “raganuga” is a compound of two words, namely raga, “loving attachment”, and anuga, “following in the wake of”. The general characteristics of these two paths are explained as follows:

vaidhi-bhaktir bhavet sastram bhaktau cet syat pravartakam
raganuga syac ced bhaktau lobha eva pravartakah (rvc 1.3)

“When devotion is caused by scriptural injunctions, it is called vaidhi-bhakti, but when its cause is spiritual greed alone, it is called raganuga-bhakti.”

yatra raganavaptatvat pravrittir upajayate
sasanenaiva sastrasya sa vaidhi-bhaktir ucyate (brs 1.2.6)

“That devotion which knows no attachment or greed, but which is prompted by the commandments of the scriptures, is called vaidhi-bhakti.”

virajantim abhivyaktam vrajavasi-janadishu
ragatmikam anusrita ya sa raganugocyate (brs 1.2.270)

“The devotion which is clearly present in the associates of the Lord in Vraja is called devotion filled with loving attachment (ragatmika-bhakti), and devotion following in the wake of this ragatmika-bhakti is called raganuga-bhakti.” As one desires to approach the Lord, so the Lord will approach the aspirant. (bg. 4.11) Whatever one remembers at the time of death, that he will attain without fail. (bg. 8.6) Reflecting on these famous words of the Bhagavad Gita, one can easily understand that varieties of

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goals are attained in accordance with one's desires. It is not that all paths lead to the same goal.

vaidhi-raganuga-marga-bhedenā parikirtitah
dvividhah khalu bhavo'tra sadhanabhinivesajah (brs 1.3.7)

“The paths of vaidhi and raganuga are known to be separate from each other.

Engagement in these two forms of practice certainly awakens two distinct varieties of bhava.” The goals of these two paths of devotion in practice are understood as follows:

vidhi-bhakte parshada-dehe vaikunthete yaya (cc 2.24.87)

“Through vidhi-bhakti, one will attain the form of an associate in Vaikuntha.”

aisvarya-jnane vidhi-bhajana kariya
vaikunthake yaya catur-vidha mukti pana (cc 1.3.17)

“Those who worship according to scriptural commandments, being aware of the Lord's superhuman prowess, attain the four kinds of liberation in Vaikuntha.”

raga-bhakte vraje svayam-bhagavane paya (cc 2.24.85)

“Through raga-bhakti, one will attain the Lord Himself in Vraja.”

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raganuga-marge tanre bhaje yei jana
sei-jana paya vraje vrajendra-nandana (cc 2.8.221)

“He who worships on the path of raganuga will attain Vrajendranandana (Sri Krishna) in Vraja.”

In the realm of Vraja, the sweet and intimate human-like pastimes of God prevail. Only in such an atmosphere love can attain its pinnacle. Love which is filled with awareness of the Lord’s almighty is of an inferior quality. As stated by the Lord Himself:

sakala jagate more kare vidhi-bhakti
vidhi-bhakte vrama-bhava paite nahi sakti
aisvarya-jnanete saba jagat misrita
aisvarya-sithila-preme nahi mora prita
(cc 1.3.15-16)

“Everyone in this world worships Me through vidhi-bhakti. Vidhi-bhakti has no power for attaining the feelings of Vraja. The devotion of the world is mixed with knowledge of My divine prowess. I do not delight in love diluted with prowess.”

It is thus evident that there is a need to deeply reflect on the nature and practice of raganuga-bhakti for anyone who desires to perfect his loving faculty in relationship with God. There is no other means for tasting the ambrosial sweetness of the Vraja-pastimes of the Lord!

karma, tapa, yoga, jnana, vidhi-bhakti, japa, dhyana
iha haite madhurya durlabha
kevala ye raga-marge, bhaje krishne anurage
tare krishna-madhurya sulabha (cc 2.21.119)

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“Sweetness is very difficult to attain through fruitive activities, austerity, yoga, intellectual speculation, vidhi-bhakti, recitation of mantras or meditation. The sweetness of Sri Krishna is easily attainable only for the one who affectionately worships Him on the path of raga.”

Sadhaka:

Thank you so much. What is **the nature of raganuga-bhakti?**

Gurudeva:

Raganuga-bhakti specifically means devotion which is inspired by and follows in the wake of Sri Krishna's eternal associates in the divine realm of Vraja. Their love is known as ragatmika, being filled with natural loving thirst for the Lord.

ishte svarasiki ragah paramavishtata bhavet
tan-mayi ya bhaved bhaktih satra ragatmikodita (brs
1.2.272)

“That devotion in which one is filled with abundant natural love for the Chosen One is known *ragatmika*.
This love is splendidly manifest in the eternal residents of Vraja.

Ragatmika-bhakti is known to be of two kinds.

sa kamarupa sambandharupa ceti bhaved dvidha (brs
1.2.273)

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“Its two divisions are that which has the form of an amorous desire (kamarupa) and that which has the form of a relationship (sambandharupa).”

The servants, friends and parents of the Lord are established in a relationship consisting of a recognized relationship in the society. However, the pinnacle of love present in the paramour lovers of the Lord consists of sole amorous desire, which unhesitatingly breaks through the boundaries of acceptable social interaction

Just as there are two kinds of ragatmika-bhakti, so there are two kinds of raganuga-bhakti.

ragatmikaya dvaividhyad dvidha raganuga ca sa
kamanuga ca sambandhanuga ceti nigadyate (brs 1.2.290)

“As ragatmika is of two kinds, so is raganuga. It is known as that which follows the amorous desire (kamanuga) and that which follows the relationship (sambandhanuga).”

One who, upon hearing of the sweetness of the feelings of the Lord’s eternal associates towards Him, becomes eager to attain feelings akin to theirs, begins the path of raganuga. Let us now proceed to examine the gradations between the various relationships to be attained.

There are specific flavours of raganuga-bhakti.

Sri Krishna, the Original Personality of Godhead, descended to this world along with His associates some five thousand years ago in the land of Vraja, displaying His ever-sweet pastimes to attract the souls of this world to His divine abode.

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anugrahaya bhaktanam manusham deham asritah
bhajate tadrisih krida yah srutva tat-paro bhavet (sb
10.33.36)

“To show favor to His devotees He appears in a human form, enjoying such pastimes upon hearing of which one must become completely devoted to Him.”

After Sri Krishna and His associates disappeared from the visible realm of Vraja, various schools of thought and practice, intent on attaining His service, arose. In due course of time, Sri Krishna Himself, eager to taste the sweetness of His own service, descended to this world in the form of a great teacher and devotee named Sri

Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu, known as Visvambhara during His earlier life.

prema-rasa-niryasa karite asvadana
raga-marga bhakti loke karite pracarana
rasika-sekhara krishna parama-karuna
ei dui hetu haite icchara udgama (cc 1.4.15-16)

“Sri Krishna is the crest-jewel of relishers and the most merciful one. His desire (to descend to this world) arose out of two reasons, as he wished to taste the essence of loving rapture and to broadcast devotion on the path of raga to the world.”

The unprecedented contribution of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in the realm of raganuga-bhakti has been narrated as follows:

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anarpita-carim cirat karunayavatirnah kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasam sva-bhakti-sriyam
harih purata-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandipitah
sada hridaya-kandare sphuratu vah saci-nandanah
(Vidagdha-madhava 1.2)

“Out of His causeless mercy, He descended in this age of Kali to bestow the matchless treasure of the rapture of amorous love in His own service, which had not been given since a long time. May this son of Saci, Hari radiant with the enchanting complexion of multitude of gold, always be manifest in the core of your heart!”

The concept of amorous love was certainly present in the bhakti-traditions predating Sri Caitanya. What, then, is His unique contribution? It is a unique variety of amorous love in servitude. Amorous love (kamarupa-bhakti) is divided into two distinct categories.

kamanuga bhavet trishna kama-rupanugamini (brs 1.2.297)

“The following of amorous feelings (kamanuga) appears as a thirst for following in the wake of that which consists of amorous feeling (kamarupa).”

sambhogeccha-mayi tat-tad-bhavecchatmeti sa dvidha (brs 1.2.298)

“Its two divisions are (1) filled with desire for union (sambhogeccha-mayi) and (2) consisting of a desire for Her feelings (tad-bhaveccatma).”

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keli-tatparyavaty eva sambhogeccha-mayi bhavet
tad-bhavecchatmika tasam bhava-madhurya-kamita (brs
1.2.299)

“That which aims for amorous sports is known as sambhogecchamayi, and that which longs for the sweetness of the feelings is known as tad-bhavecchatmika.”
The desire for union is understood to consist of four kinds of longing for union.

sandarsana-samjalpa-samsparsa-samprayoga-lakshana-
bheda-catushtaya-bhinnatvam drisyate (Pṛiti-sandarbha
375)

“The four different categories are understood as the various appearances of seeing, discussion, touching and sexual union.”

Particularly the last two forms of sambhoga characterize the sambhogecchamayi-devotion. The second division of amorous devotion, which consists solely of the longing to relish the sweetness of the feelings of Sri Radha, devoid of even a scent of desire for bodily enjoyment with Sri Krishna, is known as manjari-bhava; this is the mood of the maidservants of Sri Radha.

The eminent glories of the love of Sri Radha, the foremost among the consorts of Sri Krishna, are narrated throughout the scriptures and the poetry of the saints. Indeed, She is the very embodiment of love for the Lord.

hladinira sara amsa tara ‘prema’ nama
ananda-cinmaya-rasa premera akhyana (cc 2.8.159)

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“The essential aspect of the pleasure-giving potency (hladini) of Sri Krishna is called ecstatic love (prema), which is understood as joy filled with rapturous mellows.”

premera parama-sara ‘mahabhava’ jani
sei mahabhava-riupa radha-thakurani (cc 2.8.160)

“The supreme pinnacle of prema is known to be maha-bhava, and Sri Radha Thakurani is the embodiment of this maha-bhava.”

premera ‘svarupa-deha’ prema-vibhavita
krishnera preyasi-sreshtha jagate vidita (cc 2.8.162)

“Her body is the very embodiment of prema and a transformation of prema. Throughout the world, She is known to be the dearmost among Sri Krishna’s beloveds.”

sei mahabhava haya ‘cintamani-sara’
krishna-vancha purna kare ei karya tantra (cc 2.8.164)

“This maha-bhava is the the essence of a divine touch-stone; Her task is to fulfill all the desires of Sri Krishna.” When one’s love for the beloved of Sri Krishna exceeds one’s love for Him, this condition is known as the jubilant arising of attachment (bhavollasa-rati), the foundational mood of a maidservant of Sri Radha.

sancari syat samano va krishna-ratyah suhrid-ratih
adhika pushyamana ced bhavollasa ratih (brs 2.5.128)

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“When the affection for Sri Krishna and a dear one are equal, the feeling is known as a transitory feeling, but when devotion to a dear one is nourished and becomes dominant, the feeling is known as bhavollasa-rati.”

The pinnacle of divine joy which is present in the heart of Sri Radha becomes reflected into the hearts of Her dedicated maidservants, thus causing them to taste love which far exceeds any other form loving relish both in quantity and in quality.

pataty asre sasra bhavati pulake jata-pulakah
smite bhati smera malimani jate sumalinah
anasadya svalir mukuram abhivikshya sva-vadanam
sukham va duhkham va kimapi kathaniyam mrigadrisah
(Krishnahnika-kaumudi 5.128)

“Oh doe-eyed beauties! When your girlfriends are absent, you may have to look at a mirror before you can say whether you are happy or sad. They reflect every mood of yours, they perform all the services of a looking glass! When tears fall from your eyes they also cry; when you are excited, their hairs stand on end; when you laugh they also do so; and when you become depressed, they also look down-hearted.”

This manjari-bhava is the unique contribution of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and the cherished treasure of the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition. One who desires to attain the ultimate goal of life should diligently study the writings of the saints on the subject matter of raganuga-bhakti. Prior to engaging in any activity, a thoughtful person must carefully assess his eligibility for the same.

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Sadhaka:

Who is qualified for raganuga-bhakti?

Gurudeva:

We will now examine the causes and the characteristics of eligibility for bhakti in general and for raganuga-bhakti in particular.

No one is disqualified from engaging in acts of devotion on account of his lack of skill, of mental prowess or indeed of any other mundane faculty, nor does anyone become qualified for bhakti due to the virtue of such abilities.

Rather, a mere desire for engaging in acts of devotion is the cause of eligibility for devotion.

bhaktau pravrittir atra syat taccikirsha suniscaya
sastral lobhat tac cikirshu syatam tad adhikarinau (rvc 1.4)

“According to devotional scriptures, an exclusive desire to engage in the practices of bhakti is the cause of engaging in bhakti. Bhakti of two different natures is born from fear of scriptural injunctions and from intense sacred greed respectively; accordingly, there are two kinds of candidates for bhakti-sadhana.”

The desire to engage in the practices of bhakti is born out of two distinct motivations. The one in whom the desire for devotion awakens on account of scriptural commandments is eligible for the practice of vaidhi-bhakti.

yah kenapyati bhagyena jata sraddho’sya sevane
natisakto na vairagya bhagasyam adhikaryasau (brs 1.2.14)

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“When, out of inconceivable luck, faith awakens in someone for the service of the Lord, and he has no firm attachment for the Lord and is only slightly averse to bodily attachments, such a person is eligible for sadhana-bhakti.” This desire for devotion is characterized by obedience of and faith in the scriptural commandments, which invoke a sense of duty for the service of the Lord. This desire is born out of the fear of violating the scriptures and thus incurring sin and consequent calamity. On the other hand, eligibility for the practice of raganuga-bhakti is born out of greed for attaining feelings akin to the Lord’s dear ones.

ragatmikaika-nishtha ye vrajavasi-janadayah
tesham bhavaptaye lubdho bhaved atradhikaravan (brs 1.2.291)

“The very being of those who reside in Vraja is steeped in loving attachment. One who becomes greedy to attain feelings similar to theirs possesses eligibility.”

The symptoms of the awakening of greed for attaining feelings akin to the Lord’s eternal associates is described as follows:

tat tad bhavadi madhurye srute dhir yad apekshate
natra sastram na yuktim ca tal lobhotpatti lakshanam (brs. 1.2.292)

“When one hears about the sweetness of their feelings and so forth, and a desire for attaining the same awakens in the consciousness without dependence on scripture and logic, this is a symptom of the awakening of greed (lobha).”

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However, the impetus of the vaidhi-bhakta remains dependent on the commandments of the scripture.

vaidha-bhakty-adhikari tu bhavavirbhavanavadhi
atra sastram tatha tarkam anukulam apekshate (brs 1.2.293)

“However, until bhava arises within the one eligible for vaidhi-bhakti, he remains dependent on scriptures and logical considerations.”

The greed for attaining Vraja-bhava only awakens in rare and fortunate souls.

ragamayi-bhaktira haya ‘ragatmika’ nama
taha suni lubdha haya kona bhagyavan (cc 2.22.152)

“That devotion which consists of deep attachment is called ragatmika. One who becomes greedy upon hearing about this is fortunate.”

lobhe vrajavasi-bhave kore anugati
sastra-yukti nahi mane – raganugara prakriti (cc 2.22.153)

“Greedily following in the wake of the feelings of the residents of Vraja, without considering scriptures or logic – such is the nature of raganuga.”

In such a person, the attraction for attaining particular loving feelings for the Lord overrules all other considerations.

vrajalila parikarastha sringaradi bhava madhurye srute dhir
idam mama bhuyat iti lobhotpattikale sastra yukty apeksha
na syat satyam ca tasyam lobhatvasyaivasiddheh nahi

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kenacit sastra drishtya lobhah kriyate napi lobhaniya vastu
praptau svasya yogyayogyatva vicarah ko'py udbhavati.
kintu lobhaniya vastuni srute drishte va svata eva lobha
utpadyate (rvc 1.5)

“If, upon hearing of the sweetness of the feelings, headed by passion, of Sri Krsna’s associates in the Vraja-lila, one thinks, ‘Let me also attain such feelings,’ then at this time one need not depend either on the revealed scriptures or on favorable logical considerations. If such dependence remains, it cannot be said that greed has appeared. Greed never arises in anyone because of scriptural considerations, and in anyone who is desirous to attain the object of the greed, no considerations of qualification or lack of qualification arise. Rather, greed arises only by hearing about the object of greed or by seeing it.”

As love cannot arise due to commandments or as the outcome of a certain pattern of reasoning, it is not possible that eligibility for raganuga-bhakti would arise on account of scriptural commandments or the subsequent logical considerations. Indeed, one who becomes greedy for Vraja-bhava hastens to attain it wherever it is available.

krishna-bhakti-rasa-bhavita-matih
kriyatam yadi kuto'pi labhyate
tatra laulyam api mulyam ekalam
janma-koti-sukritair na labhyate (Padyavali 14)

“Wherever that consciousness laden with rapturous loving feelings for Sri Krishna is available, from there it must be acquired. For that there is indeed only one price, greed, which cannot be attained through pious deeds even in millions of births.”

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Though the direct cause for the awakening of greed is the hearing of narrations about the Vraja-pastimes of Sri Krishna, one must also give due consideration to the foundational cause of the phenomena.

krishna tad bhakta karunya matra lobhaika hetuka
pushti margataya kaiscid iyam raganugocyate (brs 1.2.309)

“The only causes of the appearance of sacred greed are the mercy of Sri Krishna or the mercy of His devotee. Therefore some also call the path of raganuga-bhakti with the name pushti-marga (the path of grace).”

Commenting on this verse, Sri Jiva Gosvami states:

krishneti – matra padasya vidhi marge kutracit karmadi
samarpanam api dvaram bhavatiti tad vicchedarthah
prayoga iti bhava

“The word *matra* is used in the above because sometimes the offering of fruitive activities can lead to entry into *vaidhi-bhakti*, whereas *raganuga-bhakti* is only (*matra*) attained through grace.”

Though the paths of *vaidhi* and *raganuga* are two distinct paths, the practice of *vaidhi-bhakti* can offer indirect support for the awakening of the eligibility for *raganuga-bhakti*, its various practices being agents which assist in the purification of the heart. In addition to grace, a certain lucidity of awareness is necessary to facilitate the appearance of the aforementioned greed.

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yasya purvoktam raga-viseshe rucir eva jatasti na tu raga-visesha eva svayam, tasya tadrisha-raga-sudhakara-karabhasa-samullasita-hridaya-sphatika-maneh sastradi-srutasu tadrisyu ragatmikaya bhakteh paripatishv api rucir jayate tatas tadiyam ragam rucy-anugacchanti sa raganuga tasyaiva pravartate (Bhakti-sandarbha 310)

“When the splendour of the moonrays of raga shines upon the crystal-like heart of a person in whom a taste for the aforementioned specific raga has awokened, but who himself does not possess distinct raga, his heart rejoices. He then hears from the scriptures about such ragatmika-bhakti and consequently develops a taste for the same. Following his taste for such raga, he engages in raganuga-bhakti.”

Just as pure crystal reflects the colours of an object placed next to it, so the heart untainted by lust, anger, and mundane greed easily develops a taste for the rapturous mellows of ragatmika-bhakti. In the initial stages of the practice of raganuga-sadhana, one’s practice must be mixed with vaidhi-bhakti.

ajata-tadrisha-rucina tu sad-viseshadara-matradrita raganugapi vaidhi-samvalitaivanushtheya tatha loka-samgrahartham pratishthitena jata-tadrisha-rucina ca atra misratve ca yatha-yogyam raganugayaiki krityaiva vaidhi kartavya (Bhakti-sandarbha 312)

“Those in whom such taste (rucī) has not awokened, but who have a special interest for it, should engage in a mixture of raganuga and vaidhi. For the sake of establishing an example for the people of the world, the one in whom such ruci has awokened will do the same. Therefore, as

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appropriate, raganuga should be performed together with vaidhi.”

Since at this stage ruci as the driving force behind the practice of devotion has not yet been firmly established in the heart, one must engage in the practice of mixed raganuga-sadhana out of obligation at all times, just as one would do in regular vaidhi-sadhana.

It is understood that the greed which makes one eligible for following the feelings of the residents of Vraja awakens gradually in accordance with the degree of the purification of the heart.

sa ca lobho raga vartma vartinam bhaktanam guru-
padasraya lakshanam arabhya svabhishta vastu sakshat
prapti samayam abhivyapya “yatha yathatma
parimrijyate’sau mat punya gatha sravanabhidhanaih, tatha
tatha pasyati vastu sukshmam cakshur yathaivanjana
samprayuktam “ iti bhagavad ukter bhakti hetukantah
karana suddhi taratamyat prati dinam adhikadhiko bhavati
(rvc 1.8)

“It is described that the devotees on the path of raga gradually progress from the initial surrender to the feet of Sri Guru up to the stage of directly attaining the object of their desires.

‘When the eye is smeared with medicinal ointment, its ability of perception becomes more and more refined, and accordingly it is able to perceive more and more subtle objects; similarly, according to the degree of the mind’s having become purified by hearing and chanting of My purifying pastimes, all the subtle truths of reality become manifest in the heart of the sadhaka.’

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From these words of the Lord it is known that through sadhana-bhakti the consciousness of the sadhaka becomes more purified every day, and he gradually becomes more and more greedy.”

In accordance with the purification of the heart and the growth of spiritual greed, one’s eligibility for raganuga-bhakti increases day by day from an initial desire to an intense, captivating longing for the object of one’s desires. Thus one gradually proceeds through the various stages of devotion.

atha raganuga-bhakti majjanasyanartha-nivritti-nishtha-ruci-asakty-antaram prema-bhumikarudhasya sakshat svabhishta-prapti-prakarah pradarsyate (rvc 2.7)

“Then it will be described how the one, who has progressed on the path of raganuga-bhakti through the cessation of the evils (anartha-nivritti), firmness (nishtha), taste (ruci), and attachment (asakti) all the way to the attainment of ecstatic love (prema), will directly come to attain his desired object.”

Sadhaka:

Who is eligible for hearing narrations of the lord’s pastimes?

Gurudeva:

We shall now take the question one step further, examining the nature of those deeds, namely hearing about and seeing the object of one’s desires, which provoke the aforementioned spiritual greed.

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satam prasangan mama virya-samvido
bhavanti hrit-karna-rasayanah kathah
taj-joshanad asv apavarga-vartmani
sraddha ratir bhaktir anukramishyati (sb 3.25.25)

“In the association of saints, discussing the narrations of My wonderful deeds acts as the life-giving elixir for the heart and the ears. Being thus satisfied, one quickly proceeds on the path of liberation, as faith, attraction and devotion gradually appear.”

The glory of hearing about the loving sports of Sri Krishna is narrated everywhere in the scriptures.

vikriditam vraja-vadhuhbir idam ca vishnoh
sraddhanvito yah srinuyad atha varnayed va
bhaktim param bhagavati parilabhyam kamam
hrid-rogam asv apahinoty acirena dhirah (sb 10.33.39)

“One who faithfully hears or describes the loving sports of Sri Krishna and the young maidens of Vraja will quickly drive away the heart-disease of lust, become sober, and attain supramundane devotion of the Lord.”

However, is everyone eligible for hearing such confidential topics, which may invoke thoughts of mundane sexuality in the eyes of an ignorant spectator?

kintu rahasya-lila tu paurusha-vikaravad indriyaih pitri-
putra-dasa-bhavais ca nopasya sviya-bhava-virodhat
rahasyatvam ca tasyah kvacid alpamsena kvacit tu
sarvamseneti jneyam (Bhakti-sandarbha 338)

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“However, these secret sports are not to be worshiped by those who experience male transformations in their senses, or by those who are in the moods of father, son, and servant, for it would be contrary to their moods.

Confidentiality is understood according to the partial or complete touching of limbs.”

Thus the individual who desires to absorb himself in narrations of the Lord must himself assess his own eligibility and aspire to hear narrations in accordance with his capacity. However, such confidential topics should never be narrated to antagonistic individuals who are likely to disrespect the supremely sacred human-like sports of the Lord.

asraddadhane vimukhe 'py asrinvati yas copadesah siva
namaparadhah (Padma-purana, Brahma-khanda 25.15-18)

“One who describes the auspiciousness of the Name unto those who are faithless, opposed, and unwilling to hear, is an offender against the Holy Name.”

Hence the aforementioned verse (sb 10.33.39) lays emphasis on hearing such narrations with faith. Faith in the divinity and the purifying nature of the deeds of the Lord awakens through associating with faithful saints, as one learns about the scriptural conclusions regarding the supramundane status of the Lord from them.

For the faithful people, whether pure or impure in heart, hearing narrations of the deeds of the Lord is recommended. The immense potency of the nectarine pastimes of Sri Krishna is praised in the Govinda Lilamritam, one among the original texts narrating the eight-fold daily pastimes of the Lord.

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yat pitam srutivan manobhir anisam trishnapradam
tvadbhutam samsaramaya haryapi pranayajonmadandhya
mohadikrit sasvac carvitam eva bhuri rasadam dehadi hrit
pushtidam
taj jiyad amrita spriha haram idam govinda lilamritam (gl
1.5)

“When drunk, it bestows astonishing, incessant thirst in the ears, speech, and the mind; it destroys the bondage of samsara, giving rise to deep affection, madness, blindness, delusion and so forth! When constantly chewed, it produces a variety of tastes, nourishing the soul, the body, and so forth; let those nectarine pastimes of Sri Govinda, which snatch away the desire for celestial ambrosia, be glorified!”

Indeed, who could fail to be attracted by such beauty and sweetness?

ko nirvrito hari-kathasu ratim na kuryat (Bhag. 2.3.12)

“Who is there who has no taste for absorption in narrations about Hari?”

nivritta-tarshair upagiyamanad
bhavaushadhad chrotra-mano-’bhiramat
ka uttamasloka-gunanuvadat
puman virajyeta vina pasughnat (sb 10.1.3)

“Description of the qualities of the Lord who is praised with the best of verses is sung and relished in the minds of

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those whose thirst for the mundane is quenched, and it is the remedy for material existence as well. Who else than a butcher could keep himself away from hearing such descriptions?" Thus a faithful person desirous of attaining the ultimate goal of life, having heard of the scriptural conclusions regarding the truths about the Lord and His infinite potencies, should engage himself in hearing narrations depicting the sweet, love-laden pastimes of Sri Krishna and His Vraja-associates.

The practice of raganuga-bhakti, though aiming at spontaneous, inherent love for Sri Krishna, is not whimsical in nature. The various aspects of raganuga-sadhana have been carefully described in the writings of the saints. Anyone who desires to smoothly progress on the path of raga must study their words diligently.

Sadhaka:

Can you please tell us about the initial stages of practice?

Gurudeva:

Just as one must learn from a teacher if he desires to master any given subject in this mundane world, so one must approach a realized teacher who can give adequate guidance on the path of raga.

sa ca lobho raga vartma vartinam bhaktanam guru-
padasraya lakshanam arabhya svabhishta vastu sakshat
prapti samayam abhivyapya (rvc 1.8)

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“It is described that the devotees on the path of raga gradually progress from the initial surrender to the feet of Sri Guru up to the stage of directly attaining the object of their desires.”

It has been described earlier that the mercy of Sri Krishna or His devotees is the cause of that spiritual greed, which causes eligibility for the practice of raganuga-bhakti.

sa ca bhagavat kripa hetuko ‘nuragi bhakta kripa hetukas
ceti dvividhah
tatra bhakta kripa hetuko dvividhah praktana adhunikas ca
praktanah—paurva bhavika tadrisa bhakta kripotthah,
adhunikah etaj janmavadhi tadrisa bhakta kripotthah
adye sati lobhanantaram tadrisa guru caranasrayanam
dvitiye guru caranasrayanantaram lobha pravrittir bhavati
(rvc 1.6)

“There are said to be two causes for the appearance of the aforementioned greed, namely the mercy of God and the mercy of an anuragi devotee. There are again two kinds of mercy bestowed by a devotee, namely old and recent.

Greed which is born from the mercy of such devotees of Sri Krishna in a previous life is known as old (praktana). Greed which is born from the mercy of a devotee in the present life is known as recent (adhunika). In the one in whom greed has awakened in a previous birth, his greed manifests and he then takes shelter of the feet of a raganugya devotee guru. One whose greed is recent will first take shelter of the feet of a guru, after which his greed appears.”

It is thus evident that approaching a guru is necessary for anyone who desires to progress towards the ultimate goal of life with firm confidence.

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In describing the 64 main aspects of practice in his Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu, Sri Rupa Gosvami delineates the first four as follows:

guru-padasrayas tasmat krishna-dikshadi-sikshanam
visrambhena guroh seva sadhu-vartmanuvartanam (brs
1.2.74)

“(1) Taking shelter of the feet of a guru, (2) Accepting initiation in Krishna-mantra and subsequent instructions, (3) Serving the guru with confidence, and (4) Following the path traversed by the saints.” The importance of accepting initiation into a Krishna-mantra has been described as follows:

divyam jnanam yato dadyat kuryat papasya sankshayam
tasmat diksheti sa prokta desikais tattva kovidaih
ato gurum pranamyaivam sarvasvam vinivedya ca
grihniyat vaishnavam mantram diksha purvam vidhanatah
(Bhakti-sandarbha 283)

“That, which bestows divine knowledge and destroys all sins, is called diksha by the knowers of the truth. Therefore, paying obeisance to the guru and offering unto him one’s all, one should receive Vaishnava mantra-diksha preceded with proper procedures.”

The great teachers have further glossed the importance of meditating on the diksha-mantra as a means of establishing a specific relationship with the Lord, which is, after all, the object of raganuga-bhakti sadhana.

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divyam jnanam hy atra srimati mantre bhagavat-svarupa-jnanam, tena bhagavata sambandha-visesha-jnanam ca (ibid.)

“Here divine knowledge means the knowledge about the Lord’s intrinsic identity which lies within the mantra, along with specific knowledge of one’s relationship with the Lord.” This is repeated over and over again:

sri-naradadi-vartmanusaradbhiih sri-bhagavata saha sambandha-visesham diksha-vidhanena sri-guru-carana-sampaditam cikirshadbhiih kritayam dikshayam arcanam avasyam kriyetaiva (ibid.)

“Those who are following the path of Narada and others, and who desire the particular relationship with the Lord that is brought about at the feet of the guru through the rite of diksha, necessarily perform arcana (worship) when diksha is completed.”

Steadfast contemplation on the diksha-mantra gradually gives rise to and strengthens a certain loving relationship with the Lord. To refine the conception of the practitioner, it is customary for the guru to further instruct the initiate on the nature of his specific eternal, spiritual identity.

sakshad vraja-jana-viseshayaiva mahyam sri-guru-caranair mad-abhishta-visesha-siddhy-artham upadishtam bhavayami (Bhakti-sandarbha 312)

“I meditate on the specific form of one of Krsna’s associates in Vraja, which my revered guru has instructed me in, in order to attain my specifically desired perfection.”

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Therefore, the eager disciple will at one point in time approach

the guru, inquiring about the eleven-fold existence (ekadasa-bhava) of his own eternal form (siddha-deha) in the spiritual world, along with the identities of the predecessor gurus in his lineage. The eleven prominently contemplated aspects of the siddha-form are known as follows:

1. nama – name of a manjari;
2. rupa (varna) – form (complexion);
3. vayas – age;
4. vesa – color of dress;
5. sambandha – relationship;
6. yutha – group (of a certain sakhi);
7. ajna – order;
8. seva – service;
9. parakashtha – highest aspiration;
10. palyadasi-bhava – the mood of a maintained maidservant;
11. nivasa – residence.

The unbroken chain of gurus, leading back to the eternal associates of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, is called guru-pranali (channel of gurus), and its celestial counterpart, the lineage of gurus in their Vraja-identities, is called siddha-pranali (channel of the perfected). Through this channel, the divine love of Vraja flows down into the heart of the aspirant.

esha tu bhaktis tan nitya parikaraganad
arabhyedanintaneshvapi tad bhakteshu mandakiniva
pracarati . . . sa tathabhuta nitya dhamni nitya parshadeshu

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nityam cakasti surasarid iva tad bhakta pranalya prapance
‘vatarati (Siddhanta-ratna of Sri Baladeva Vidyabhusana)

“This bhakti is being promulgated from the eternal associates of Sri Hari down to the present day practicing devotees like the current of the Mandakini-river (the celestial Ganges). Bhakti is always present within the Lord’s eternal associates within the eternal abode, and flows down to the mundane world through the drain of Sri Hari’s devotees like the stream of the Mandakini.”

In their daily meditation, the practitioners of raganuga-bhakti always meditate on the divine forms and characteristics of their predecessors along with the eternal associates of Sri Radha and Krishna.

tatradau manjari-rupan gurvadin tu sviyān sviyān pranaly-anusarena samsmaret sri-guru-parama-guru-krameneti tatah sri-radhikam dhyayet
tatah sri-nandanandanam (Paddhati of Dhyanacandra Gosvami,
344)

“In this meditation, before anything else, the practitioner should meditate on the manjari-forms of his guru-pranali, beginning with his guru, then parama-guru, etc. Then he shall meditate on Sri Radhika, and after that Sri Nandanandana (Krishna).”

Just as one hears narrations of the form and qualities of Sri Radha and Sri Krishna from authoritative sources, as they are inaccessible through the faculties of sensual perception and speculation, similarly one hears of the forms, qualities and so forth of all of Their associates, including the guru,

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from a realized person who is absorbed in the eternal service of Radha and Krishna in his eternal, spiritual identity.

manjaryo bahusah rupa-guna-sila-vayo 'nvitah
nama-rupadi tat sarvam guru-dattam ca bhavayet
tatra tatra sthita nityam bhajet sri-radhi-ka-hari
bhavayan sadhako nityam sthitva krishna-priya-grihe
tad ajna-palako bhutva kaleshv ashtasu sevate (ibid. 107-109)

“One should meditate on the various forms, qualities, natures, blooming youth and so forth of the manjaris, as described by the guru. One should always stay with them, worshiping Sri Radhika and Hari. The practitioner shall stay in the home of Sri Radha, the beloved of Krishna, following their orders and rendering service throughout the eight phases of the day.”

Thus, having taken shelter of a genuine guru, one proceeds on the path of raganuga-bhakti sadhana.

Sadhaka:

Does the remembrance of Sri Krishna and His associates play an important role here?

Gurudeva:

In his Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu (1.2.294-296), Sri Rupa Gosvami has presented three essential verses describing the practice of raganuga-bhakti. We shall now proceed to examine them one by one.

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krishnam smaran janam casya preshtham nije samihitam
tat tat katha rata casau kuryad vasam vraje sada (brs
1.2.294)

“One should remember the beloved Sri Krsna and His associate of one’s own preference, being attached to narrations about them and always residing in Vraja.” Examining the commentaries of the predecessors, a number of important considerations can be drawn from this verse. Sri Visvanatha Cakravarti has explained (rvc 1.11) this verse as follows:

First, through the words “remembering Krishna”, it is revealed that raga is a special feature of the mind, therefore one should remember; therefore the aspect of remembrance (smarana) is foremost on the path of raganuga. “Beloved” means the dearmost, Sri Krishna, the lord of Vrindavana, who enjoys pastimes suitable to His own mood. “His people” means Sri Krishna’s people. Who are they? For this it is said, “of one’s own preference”, which means the desirable ones, such as Sri Radha, the mistress of Vrindavana, Lalita, Visakha, Rupa Manjari and others.

Although Sri Krishna is the object of one’s desires in a passionate mood, the associates of Sri Krishna, the ladies of Vraja headed by Sri Radha, are even more the object of the devotee’s desires on account of their having an excessive amount of passionate feelings which the devotee desires. “Live in Vraja” – this statement means that if it is not physically possible, at least in one’s mind one should live in Vraja.

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Thus residing – whether physically or mentally – in the sacred land of Vraja, filled with stimulus for the remembrance of the sweet pastimes of Vraja, while remembering the pastimes of Sri Krishna and His associates one is particularly inspired by, filled with attachment for narrations about them, is the quintessence of raganuga-bhakti.

Sadhaka:

How, then, is service to be rendered? Sri Rupa Gosvami explains this in the next verse.

Gurudeva:

There is internal and external service.

seva sadhaka rupena siddha rupena catra hi
tad bhava lipsuna karya vrajalokanusaratah (brs 1.2.295)

“One should serve both in his present sadhaka-body and in his siddha-form, following in the wake of the residents of Vraja, desiring to have feelings similar to theirs.”

This very verse, in particular the interpretation of what is meant with serving with the sadhaka-form while following the residents of Vraja, was the root of a great controversy in the Gaudiya tradition at the time of Sri Visvanatha Cakravarti. His interpretation of the verse, which came to be accepted as conclusive, reads as follows:

“With the sadhaka-form” means in the present body, “with the siddha-form” means with one’s own desired, internally conceived body suitable for the direct service of Sri Krsna,

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“desiring to attain their feelings” means to take shelter of one’s most cherished associate of Sri Krsna and one’s desired Sri Radha, the beloved of Sri Krsna, being anxiously desirous to attain the passionate feelings they have.

“Service”, how is it done? It is described as being performed with either items collected mentally or items collected with the physical body. The nature of this service is described as “following the people of Vraja”.

Following the residents of Vraja means to serve according to the model of Sri Rupa Gosvami and other residents of Vraja in the sadhaka-form and to serve according to the model of Sri Rupa Manjari and other residents of Vraja in the siddha-form.

The same is echoed, though more concisely, in an earlier work of Sri Krishna Das Kaviraja:

bahya, antara, ihora dui ta sadhana
bahye sadhaka-dehe kare sravana-kirtana
mane nija-siddha-deha kariya bhavana
ratri-dine kare vraje krishnera sevana
(cc 2.22.156-157)

“External and internal, these are indeed the two sadhanas. Externally, in the sadhaka-form, one engages in hearing and chanting, and in the mind, in one’s own siddha-form, day and night one thinks of and serves Sri Krishna in Vrindavana.”

The meaning of the sadhaka-form is evident: it means the present physical body. However, the concept of siddha-form deserves further examination. How is one to serve in a siddha-form, if one has not attained perfection (siddhi)?

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After all, the siddha-devotee is the one who has attained prema, and this verse appears in a section describing sadhana-bhakti. Is this not an oxymoron?

To this, the commentators (Jiva Gosvami, Mukunda Gosvami and Visvanatha Cakravarti) answer in chorus:

siddha-rupena antas-cintitabhishta-tat-sevopayogi-dehena

“In the siddha-form means in an internally thought, desired form suitable for His service.”

The chorus is slightly broken by Mukunda Gosvami, who states “manas-cintita”, “mentally thought” in the place of “antas-cintita”, “internally thought”.

Furthermore, the word “abhishta”, “desired”, reveals that we are speaking of something which is yet to be attained.

The concept is further illuminated by Sri Narottama Das Thakura:

sadhane bhavibe yaha, siddha dehe pabe taha
raga marge ei sei upaya (Prema-bhakti-candrika 57)

“Whatever you think of during your sadhana, you will attain in your siddha-body. Such is the means on the path of raga.”

sadhane ye dhana cai, siddha dehe taha pai
pakkapakka matra se vicara (ibid. 58)

“The treasure I covet during my sadhana, I will attain in my siddha-body. The only difference between the two is their being ripe and unripe.”

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Thus, both in the present body and in the internally contemplated siddha-form, one should follow the residents of Vraja, desiring feelings akin to theirs. The service in the present, physical body is further explained in the following verse.

sravanotkirtanadini vaidha bhaktyuditani tu
yanyangani ca tanyatra vijneyani manishibhih (brs 1.2.296)

“Hearing, chanting and all the other limbs of vaidhi-bhakti are also to be engaged in. This is what the learned ones have ascertained.” Mere internal practice which neglects the external practices of bhakti, such as hearing, chanting and worshiping, is forbidden. For absorption in remembrance, a peaceful mind is required, and the mind can never be peaceful when the heart is filled with impurities.

suddhantah-karanas cet “etan-nirvidhyamananam icchatam akutobhayam” ity ady-uktatvan nama-kirtanaparityagena smaranam kuryat (Bhakti-sandarbha 265)

“According to the statement ‘etan-nirvidhyamananam icchatam akutobhayam’ (sb 2.1.11), to purify the mind, one should engage in remembrance without neglecting kirtana.” Indeed, on the virtue of its power of captivating all the senses and connecting them with the Lord, kirtana has been declared as the emperor among the practices of devotion in the present age of disturbance.

Indeed, one who neglects the practice of hearing and chanting the holy names is to be blamed on account of his disobedience of the scriptures.

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sruti-smriti-puranadi-pancaratra-vidhim vina
aikantiki harer bhaktir utpatayaiva kalpate (brs 1.2.101)

“Exclusive devotion to Lord Hari which does not follow the rules and regulations prescribed by the Srutis, Smritis, Puranas, or the Narada Pancaratra, is only causing disturbance.”

Though the impetus for the practice of raganuga-bhakti is independent from the scriptural commandments, nevertheless one who desires to learn about the path of practice must turn to the scriptures for guidance. Sri Visvanatha Cakravarti illustrates the principle in his Raga-vartma-candrika:

tatas ca tadrisa lobhavato bhaktasya lobhaniya tad bhava
praptyupaya jijnasayam satyam sastra yuktyapeksha syat
sastra-vidhinaiva sastra-pratipadita yuktyaiva ca tat
pradarsanat nanyatha yatha dugdhadishu lobhe sati katham
me dugdhadikam bhaved iti tad upaya jijnasayam tad
abhijnapta jana kritopadesa vakyapeksha syat tatas ca gam
krinatu bhavan ityadi tad upadesa vakyad eva
gavanayanatad ghasa pradana tad dohana prakaranadikam
tata eva sikshen na tu svatah (rvc 1.7)

“Now, when the aforementioned greedy devotees become inquisitive about attaining their desired feelings, we see that they depend on scriptures and logic. The attainment of the desired feelings is taught through scriptural injunctions and scriptural logic, not in any other way. Just as when greed for milk awakens, what is the means for acquiring it? One desires to know the means, and at that time he relies on the instructions of a trusted person on the means for acquiring

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milk. He will say, 'You should purchase a cow', and so forth, instructing how to bring a cow, how to feed her with grass, and how to milk her. One cannot gain knowledge independently, without being instructed."

Thus one must depend on the scriptures while pursuing the desired goal.

There is no substantial difference between the external practice of vaidhi-bhakti and raganuga-bhakti; the difference lies in motivation. When one engages externally in the various aspects of vaidhi-bhakti with greed for attaining Vraja-bhava as his driving force, such practice is called raganuga-bhakti sadhana.

In his Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu, Sri Rupa Gosvami has delineated the 64 principle aspects of devotion in practice. In the end, he repeats five of them, declaring these five to be eminent among all the practices of devotion.

sraddha viseshatah prithih sri-murter anghri-sevane
srimad-bhagavatarthanam asvado rasikaih saha
sajatiyasaye snigdhe sadhau sangah svato vare
nama-sankirtanam sriman-mathura-mandale sthitih
anganam pancakasyasya purva-vilikhitasya ca
nikhila-sraishthya-bodhaya punar apy atra kirtanam
(brs 1.2.90-92)

1. Serving the lotus feet of the Deity with faith and particular loving disposition
2. Relishing the taste of the meanings of the Bhagavata with those who are expert in tasting the moods of loving rapture
3. Associating with saints who have similar inclinations, who are soft-hearted and affectionately disposed towards

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oneself, and who are more advanced than one is
4. Engaging in congregational chanting of the holy names
5. Residing in the area of Mathura-mandala (the land of Vraja).

These aforementioned five limbs are understood as the essence of everything, and therefore they are glorified again.”

The inner, contemplative practices of raganuga-bhakti are divided into two categories, namely spontaneous (svarasiki) and static (mantramayi).

tatra nana-lila-pravaha-rupataya svarasiki gangeva
ekaika-lilatmataya mantropasana-mayi tu labdha-tat-
sambhava-hrada-srenir iva jneya (Krishna-sandarbha 153)

“Spontaneous pastimes are like the flow of the Ganges, as there are many different pastimes that flow into one another continuously.

The static pastimes are compared to a lake created by the Ganges in which one particular pastime is concentrated upon. This is generally meditated upon at the time of mantra worship, hence the name mantramayi.”

The contemplation on the spontaneous pastimes refers to contemplating on the eight-fold daily pastimes (ashtakaliyala) of Sri Radha and Krishna in Vraja.

The outline of these pastimes is mentioned in the Govinda-lilamritam of Sri Krishna Das Kaviraja:

kunjad goshtham nisante pravisati kurute
dohanannasanadyam

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pratah sayam ca lilam viharati sakhibhiih sangave carayan
gah
madhyahne catha naktam vilasati vipine
radhayaddhapharahne
goshtham yati pradoshe ramayati suhrido yah sa krishno
'vatan nah (1.4)

“At the end of the night, the Lord returns home from the forest; in the morning, he milks the cows and takes his meal. In the forenoon, he takes the cows to pasture and at noon meets with Srimati Radharani at Radha Kunda. In the afternoon, he returns to Nandagrama with the cows and cowherd boys, enjoying different pastimes with them through the evening. In the later evening he takes a meal and then goes off to meet with Radha in the forest. May Lord Krsna, whose daily activities are such, be kind and deliver us all.”

However, inner participation in the eight-fold daily pastimes necessitates a considerable absorption in one's internally conceived siddha-form, which is suitable for direct service of Sri Radha and Krishna, as well as acquaintance with the scenery of the pastime along with its numerous characters. Therefore, the practitioners first focus their attention on static meditation.

A classical depiction of such meditation is to be found in the invocation of the Caitanya Caritamrita:

divya-vrindaranya-kalpa-drumadhah
srimad-ratnagara-simhasana-sthau
srimad-radha-srila-govinda-devau
preshthalibhiih sevyamanau smarami
(cc 1.1.16)

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“I meditate on Sri Radha and Srila Govinda Deva, who are seated on a beautiful throne in a jewelled palace under the shade of the desire trees of Vrindavana, surrounded by many dear friends and handmaids who eagerly serve them.”

Such meeting takes place at yogapitha, “the seat of union”. Sri Radha and Krishna, along with their associates, assemble thrice daily on the platform of yogapitha to bless the practicing devotee and to accept his service. The morning-time meeting takes place at Gupta-kunda near Nandisvara, the mid-day meeting takes place in Madana-sukhada-kunja at Radha Kunda, and the nocturnal meeting takes place in a jewelled temple of the Maha-yogapitha and Govinda-sthali.

The golden platform of yogapitha is shaped like an eight-petaled lotus. Sri Radha and Krishna are surrounded by Their confidantes, namely the eight sakhis (girl-friends), who are located on the outer part of the inner eight petals of the lotus, the eight manjaris (maidservants) who are located on the inner part of the inner eight petals of the lotus, and the eight additional sakhis located on the eight outer petals of the lotus.

Following his guru who has assumed a form similar to the confidantes of the Divine Couple, the aspirant renders various services to everyone in his own internal guru-given form of a maidservant.

Sri Narottama Das Thakura has written a captivating poem depicting the scenery of the yogapitha.

vrindavana ramya-sthan, divya-cintamani-dham
ratana-mandira manohar
avrita kalindi-nire, raja-hamsa keli kare

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tahe sobhe kanaka kamal
tara madhye hema pith, ashta-dalete veshtita
ashta-dale pradhana nayika
tara madhye ratnasane, basiyachen dui-jane
syama-sange sundari radhika
o riupa lavanya-rasi, amiya padiche khasi
hasya parihasa sambhashane
narottama-dasa kay, nitya-lila sukha-may
sadai sphuruk mora mane
(Prarthana)

“What an enjoyable place, this Vrindavana, the abode of celestial touchstone! There is a delightful jewelled temple surrounded by the Yamuna River, which is filled with playing swans and golden lotus flowers.

In one such large golden lotus is a podium surrounded by eight large petals in which stand the chief girlfriends of Radha. In the very centre is a jewel-decked throne upon which the beautiful Radharani is seated in the company of the blackish and enchanting Sri Krsna.

Their forms are like a mountain of loveliness from which nectar is tumbling like waterfalls. They laugh and exchange joking conversation.

Narottama Dasa says: “The eternal pastimes of the Lord are full of happiness; may they always be manifest in my mind!””

Sadhaka:

Can you tell us about Sri Caitanya and Sri-Sri Radha-Krishna in this context?

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Gurudeva:

The confidential pastimes of Sri Radha and Krishna are far removed from the residents of the mundane realm.

Nevertheless, Sri Krishna, accepting the feelings and lustre of Sri Radha, descended into this world to relish the nectarine taste of His own service and to spread devotion on the path of raga to the mankind. In his kindness, He broke open the dam of divine love, providing an easy gateway for the present-day practitioners to walk through into the kingdom of pastimes.

Therefore it is customary in the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition to first engage in remembering the daily pastimes of Sri Caitanya, thereafter moving into the realm of Vraja in the wake of the natural flow of His feelings.

evam sri-caitanya-devam nishevy a siddha-dehena sri-
krishna-sevangam vidadhyat
(Paddhati of Dhyanacandra, 78)

“Having served Sri Caitanya Deva, one should engage in the service of Sri Krishna in one’s siddha-form.”

Sri Visvanatha Cakravarti echoes the same in his Sriman Mahaprabhorr Ashtakaliya-lila Smarana-mangala-stotram:

sri-gauranga-vidhoh sva-dhamani navadvipe 'shta-
kalodbhavam
bhavyam bhavya-janena gokula-vidhor lila-smriter aditah
(11)

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“The pastimes of the moonlike Sri Gauranga are manifest in His own abode Navadvipa during the eight phases of the day. They should be meditated upon prior to the remembrance of the pastimes of the moon of Gokula.” The eight-fold daily pastimes of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu are summarized as follows:

ratryante sayanotthitah sura-sarit snato babhau yah prage
purvahne sva-ganair-lasaty upavane tair bhati madhyahnike
yah puryam aparahnake nija-grihe sayam grihe 'thangane
srivasasya nisa-mukhe nisi vasan gaurah sa no rakshatu
(ibid. 2)

“At the end of the night, He arises from His sleep; in the morning He takes bath in Ganges, the river of the gods. In the forenoon and mid-day, He exhibits many beautiful pastimes with His devotees in the gardens. In the afternoon, he roams about in the village; in the evening he returns to His home. In the late evening and throughout the night, He stays in the courtyard of Srivasa; may this Gauranga Mahaprabhu protect me!”

These jubilant pastimes of Sri Caitanya are like an ocean from which countless streams of Sri Krishna’s pastimes flow in the wake of His moods.

krishna-lilamrita-sar, yara sata-sata dhar
dasa-dig bahe yaha haite
se caitanya-lila hay, sarovara akshay
mano-hamsa caraha tahate (cc 2.25.271)

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“Krishna’s actions are the ultimate nectar of the gods; their hundreds and hundreds of currents stream in every direction. Send the swan of your mind to swim on the lake of Caitanya, the fathomless spring from which they arise.” Therefore, one’s devotion for Sri Radha and Krishna grows in proportion to one’s devotion to Sri Caitanya.

yatha yatha gaura-padaravinde vindeta bhaktim krita-punya-rasih tatha tathotsarpati hridy akasmad radha-padambhoja-sudhambu-rasih (Caitanya-candramrita 89)

“One who has accumulated a great deal of merit, will find that as his devotion to Caitanya’s lotus feet increases, the ocean of nectar that is the lotus feet of Radha manifests itself suddenly in his heart.”

While the service of the lotus feet of Sri Radha and Krishna may be far removed from the residents of this world, if one is swept away by the waves of the loving rapture of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he will easily be tossed to the farther shore of the ocean of Yugala-seva.

gaura-prema-rasarnave, se tarange jeba dube
se radha-madhava-antaranga (Prarthana)

“He who dives into the waves of the ocean of the rapturous mellows of Gaura’s love will become a confidential associate of Sri Radha and Madhava.”

Let, therefore, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu reign victorious in the hearts of the practising devotees who aspire to dedicate their lives at the feet of Sri Radha and Govinda!

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6. The glorious nature of bhakti

Many devotees fear that they are not “pure” enough to practice bhakti, what to speak of raganuga-bhakti. But alas, there is HOPE!

In Sri Pad Vishvanatha Cakravartipada’s “Madhurya Kadambini”, we find the following wonderful paragraph with the beautiful commentary of Sri Srimat Ananta das Babaji.

bhaktes tu 'vikriditam vrajavadhubhiih' ityadau—
bhaktim param bhagavati pratilabhyam kamam hrid rogam
asvapahinotyacirena dhirah
(bhag. 10.33.39)

ityatra 'ktva' pratyayena hrid rogavatyevdhikarini paramaya
api tasyah prathamam eva pravesas tatas tayaiva parama
svatantraya kamadinam apagamas ca. tesham kadacit
sattve'pi 'api cet suduracaro bhajate mam' iti
'badhyamano'pi mad bhakta' ityadibhis ca tadvatam na
kvapi sastreshu ninda leso'pi. ajamilasya bhaktatvam
vishnudutair nirupitam. 'sanketa bhagavannama putra
snehanushangajam ityadi drishtya tad abhasavatam
apyajamiladinam bhaktatvam sarvaih sangitam eva' tad
evam karma yogadinam antah karana suddhi dravya desa
suddhyadayah sadhakas tad vaigunya dayo badhaka bhaktis
tu prana dayinyeveti. sarvatha paratantryam eva tesham.
nahi svatantrah kenapi sadhyante badhyante veti.

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TRANSLATION:

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. Srimad-Bhagavata (10.33.39) says:

“A person who faithfully hears or describes the Lord’s pastimes of rasa-lila with the gopis 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.”

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.

The messengers of Vishnu judged Ajamila as a devotee. From sastric evidence it is seen, “Ajamila uttered the name of the Lord, though he was calling his son’s name out of affection.” Uttering of the Lord’s name by Ajamila was just an abhasa (glimpse). He did not chant the Lord’s name, but merely used it to call his own son named Narayana. Still, he is glorified as a devotee by all. With karma-yoga and jnana-yoga, perfection depends on purity of heart, materials, place, and so on. Purity of all these factors assists in attaining the fruits of karma and jnana.

Their lack obstructs the attainment of their respective

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fruits.

Bhakti, however, infuses life in them. Karma, jnana, and yoga are always dependent on bhakti, and they are never independent. They are nourished by certain factors and obstructed by others.

Piyusha-kana-explanation (commentary by Srila Ananta das Babaji):

Sacrifices performed by karmis are inhibited even by minor faults, and may give opposite results. As long as lusty desires exist, jnana and yoga practice is not possible. By the slightest unworthy acts, jnanis and yogis are condemned, and their eventual falldown from their paths is inevitable. But under the shelter of bhakti, most pure and autonomous, a devotee is never condemned though some sinful activities may be observed in him. Bhakti bestows her mercy and finally gives him divine prema. The author is establishing this fact by sastric evidence. In Srimad-Bhagavata (10.33.39) while narrating the rasa-lila, the crest jewel of all pastimes, Sukadeva Muni describes the most powerful glories of devotion —

vikriditam vrajavadhubhir idam ca vishnoh
sradhhanvito'nusrinuyad atha varnayed yah bhaktim param
bhagavati pratilabhyam kamam hrid rogam
asvapahinotyacirena dhirah

"Whoever faithfully hears and narrates the loving pastimes of Sri Krishna with the ladies of Vraja will attain the topmost devotion for the Lord, will swiftly become grave and give up the heart's disease of lust."

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In this verse the saying 'he attains the highest devotion to the Lord' is an asamapika kriya or unfinished act, whereas the words kamam hrid rogam asvapahinoti, 'he will swiftly give up the heart's disease of lust' is a samapika kriya or a completed act.

Thus it is established that while lust is not yet conquered the symptoms of topmost loving devotion are already present, and that later, by the force of the most powerful and independent bhakti, the heart's disease of lust will be destroyed.

In the Vaishnava-toshani commentary on this verse it is explained "atra tu hrid rogapahanat purvam eva parama bhakti praptih tasmat parama balavad evedam sadhanam iti bhavah" that the common principle is that first lusty and other material desires are destroyed, and then one attains prema-bhakti.

Here, however, the attainment of prema-bhakti is described, though lusty desires still exist.

This indicates that hearing or describing the rasa-lila is a very powerful process of devotion by which one quickly attains prema-bhakti.

The Gosvamis explain here that the word para- bhakti refers to the most exalted prema-bhakti, existing in the Vraja gopis.

What to speak of the existence of lust, even a very sinful person can perform bhakti and still he is not condemned. Evidence is given in the Gita (9.30):

api cet suduracaro bhajate mam ananya-bhak sadhur eva sa mantavyah samyag vyavasito hi sah

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Sri Krishna says,

- "O Arjuna! If a person with his heart exclusively absorbed in worshipping Me commits very sinful acts, he is still considered a sadhu, because his efforts in devotion are commendable."

The essence of the Sarartha-Varshini-commentary of this sloka by Sri Visvanatha Cakravartipada is as follows:

"Affection of the Lord for His devotees is very natural. The devotion of a devotee is never destroyed though he commits very sinful acts. Rather, the Lord elevates him. To express this idea in this verse, the Lord describes the ananya-bhaktas, those bhaktas solely and wholeheartedly engaged in devotion. That means they do not worship any other gods, taking shelter of karma, jnana or any other path except bhakti, and desire nothing other than Krishna.

If such a devotee, by the effect of some previous sinful habits, commits violence, has illicit sex, or steals, still he must be considered as sadhu. The word mantavya in the imperative case means one must consider him as a sadhu. As this is a direct order of the Lord, non-acceptance of His order is offensive. There is hence no space for doubts as to whether or how one can be a sadhu and yet commit such sinful acts.

One may ask:

"Can a person not be partially considered a sadhu to the extent to which he is doing bhajana, while his sinful acts make him partially condemned as a sinner?" The words sadhur eva, are given here, however, eva meaning that he should not be partially considered as sadhu, but in all

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respects. He is rightly situated and sincerely believes that, “I will never give up the exclusive devotion of the Lord, though I have to go to hell or take an animal life for my sinful acts, which are difficult to give up.”

The conclusion here is that this Gita-verse glorifies ananya-bhakti, not that it condones sinful acts. Since there is generally no possibility of the existence of evil desires within the heart of an ananya-bhakta, the word api is used to indicate that 'if somehow or other they would exist'. If such a devotee accidentally commits sinful acts due to some serious evil samskaras of his previous births or by the effect of evil association, they cannot exist for long by the immense power of Bhakti-devi.

Bhakti by its presence burns the heart of a devotee in the fire of repentance and very soon purifies it. Therefore the Lord proclaims in the next verse (9.31):

kshipram bhavati dharmatma sasvac-chantim nigacchat
kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati

"O Arjuna! Such a devotee being firmly fixed in devotion very soon attains eternal peace and becomes saintly. Therefore declare loudly that My devotee never perishes."

Persons not considering the link between these two verses misunderstand their essence. They deliberately commit sinful acts on the strength of the verse api cet suduracaro, with no repentance for their acts.

They cannot be considered sadhus at all; rather, they are guilty of the grave offense of committing sinful activities on the strength of chanting the holy name.

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One should know that if one in a state of repentance, giving up all sinful activities, is constantly engaged in nama-sankirtana, then gradually the holy name becomes pleased and he again attains the stage of a sadhu, otherwise not.

In jnana-yoga, however, if a jnani commits even a slight unworthy act, he is condemned and is not considered knowledgeable.

The Bhagavata (11.18.40) says:

yas tvasamyata shad vargah pracandendriya-sarathih jnana
vairagya rahitas tri dandam upajivati

“A sannyasi following the path of jnana with uncontrolled mind and senses is controlled by the intellect acting as a chariot driver of the powerful senses. He accepts the staff of renunciation just for his own livelihood, but he is devoid of jnana and vairagya.”

On the other hand, though a devotee may commit serious evil acts, neither he nor his devotion is condemned.” The author further clarifies this fact with another verse from the Bhagavata (11.14.18):

badhyamano’pi mad-bhakto vishayair ajitendriyah prayah
pragalbhaya bhaktya vishayair nabhibhuyate

“O Uddhava! By his powerful devotion, My devotee who has not fully controlled his senses is not bewildered by sense objects.”

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To say nothing of the power of full devotion, a sinful person who has just a glimpse of bhakti (bhaktyabhasa) is considered to be a devotee.

The messengers of Lord Vishnu considered Ajamila to be a devotee.

"Ajamila accidentally uttered the Lord's name, affectionately calling his son named Narayana, not the Lord."

On the basis of this scriptural statement it can be concluded that Ajamila was considered a devotee simply by accidentally chanting the name of the Lord. Everyone glorifies him as such.

Now it can be concluded that in the practice of karma, jnana, and yoga, certain factors help in attaining perfection while others become obstacles.

For instance, purity of heart is necessary for perfection in jnana and the presence of lust is an obstacle in its practice. That practice that depends on the help of other factors and is obstructed by an obstacle cannot be considered as independent.

With most powerful bhakti, purity of heart is not necessary, since chanting and hearing is possible even in impure stages of the heart.

Moreover, the existence of lusty desires does not obstruct the practice of bhakti. Therefore, undoubtedly the path of devotion is quite independent of other paths and practices. Bhakti, being so independent, is neither nourished nor obstructed by any other process.

(taken from "Madhurya Kadambini" by Sripad Vishvanath Cakravarti Thakur, commentaries by Srila Ananta das Babaji, English translation by Advaita das)

7. The final destination (prayojana-tattva)

Understanding the highest goal is called “prayojana-tattva”. The highest goal in bhakti-yoga, prayojana-tattva, is given to us by the mercy of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

When we know our true self and when we love our true self, we can understand the way or the path we have to follow. Srila Sanatana Goswami tells us who we really are and about our eternal relationship with Sri Sri Radha Krishna and Srila Rupa Goswami shows us the way to reach our goal.

The goal is to love Sri Sri Radha Krishna in a very special way. When we want to love Krishna, we have to follow those who have the topmost love for Him. Our goal is the highest love. So we should find out who has the highest love for Krishna.

In Srila Sanatana Goswami’s work “Brihad Bhagavatamrita”, we will find out who has the highest love for Krishna. Uddhava, Krishna’s dearest friend, prays that he can take birth as a blade of grass in Vrindavana so that the feet of the gopis can touch his head permanently. When Uddhava saw Srimati Radharani talking to the bumble bee in the forest of Vrindavana, he realized that Srimati Radharani’s love for Krishna is the zenith, the highest reachable point, on the scale of pure love for the Lord. Nobody has a deeper love than Srimati Radharani.

We are very fortunate that Sri Caitanya opened up the treasure box of this most astonishing love. He freely distributed that amorous love of the gopis of Vrindavana. If we follow his teachings, written down by his most

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intimate followers, we too can realize the love of the gopis of Vrindavana. We only have to take shelter at those who have this highest love in their hearts.

We have to take shelter at the Lotus Feet of Srimati Radharani. She is compassion personified and She is our only shelter.

Srimati Radharani is our shelter (ashraya) and love of Krishna (prema-bhakti) is our goal (vishaya).

We do this by taking shelter of our Sri Gurudeva, who is very near and dear to Srimati Radharani. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu instructed **Srila Raghunatha das Goswami** to write about this subject, about the highest love imaginable.

He wrote many books, but his final work **“Sri Vilapa-kusumanjali (A flower-bouquet of lamentations)”** deals with the most intimate loving service a spiritual soul (jiva) can possibly perform: the loving service to Srimati Radharani, the soul identifying herself as a very intimate ladyfriend of Srimati Radharani.

This is the gift of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and by humbly following his teachings and the teachings of his acaryas under the guidance (anugatya) of a loving Sri Gurudeva, we all can realize this gift and live forever happily in the kingdom of Radha-dasyam (service to Srimati Radharani).

Srila Raghunatha das Goswami prays:

tvam gopika vrisharaves tanayantike ‘se
sevadhikarini guro nija-pada-padme
dasyam pradaya kuru mam vraja-kanane
shri- radhanghri-sevana-rase sukhinim sukhabdha

“O beloved spiritual master, you are always in the presence of the cowherd girl Radha, the daughter of King

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Vrishabhanu. Please award me the loving service to your lotus-like feet, which are the proprietors of devotional service. Please place me in the ocean of joy by bestowing upon me the happiness in the mellows of service to the feet of Sri Radha in the groves of Vraja Dhama.”

At the moment of initiation, the jiva-soul receives the seed of bhakti. From this moment on, the jiva-soul is about to embark on a truly fantastic journey. At the end, pure love awaits and a perfect spiritual body. It is called the siddha-deha.

When the jiva-soul receives the diksha-mantras, it is only a question of time until he realizes his God-given eternal form (siddha-deha or siddha-svarupa).

Now, the eternal FORM is not in the heart of the jiva-soul, although many still claim this misunderstanding. The only thing that is in the heart of the jiva-soul, who is the tatastha-sakti, is the potency to receive bhakti and to attain a spiritual body in Goloka Vrindavana.

Right now, we identify with our material body, but when we reach the stage of asakti or bhavaa, we are identifying truly with our eternal body.

This is the amazing thing. The jiva-soul, the spiritual drop of consciousness is different from the material body and when the jiva-soul reaches perfection by the mercy of BHAKTI (Gurudeva and Radhika), the jiva-soul will BE that perfected body, which is “provided” by Krishna.

It means that when our inner bhava is perfected (siddha), we ARE that perfected body “made of bhava”.

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Diksha-initiation is THE crucial moment and bhakti flows down from Gurudeva to Gurudeva.

My beloved Gurudeva writes:

„What do we mean by diksha or initiation?

In his Bhakti-Sandarbha (283), Srimat Jiva Goswamipad quotes the shastra to describe the greatness of initiation- “The acharyas who know the truth define ‘diksha’ as that which bestows divine knowledge and destroys all sins.”

Sri Jivapad adds: “Here ‘divine knowledge’ means the knowledge about the Lord’s swarup which lies within the mantra, along with special knowledge about our relationship with the Lord.”

“The swarup of the living entity is that he is Krishna’s eternal servant. He is Krishna’s tatastha shakti and so he is both different and non-different from Him.”

– (C.C.)

Although we are Sri Krishna’s eternal servant, we have been averse to the Lord since time infinite. Hence ignorance and illusion have gripped us.

Since we are under such illusion we identify with our false body, senses, and mind. We forget our own swarup and call this false body ‘T’.

We forget our eternal relationship with Sri Hari and become bound to spouse, children, and money.

“The living being has forgotten that he is Sri Krishna’s eternal servant, and due to that fault maya has tied a noose round his neck.”

– (C.C.)

In this way, although we are originally transcendental, we are bound by maya and wander around in the miserable material world, reincarnating from one species to the other. Thus we suffer the pain of birth, disease, old age, and death. Sri Gurudev mercifully cuts the

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bondage of maya and breathes transcendental energy into our heart. Thus he awakens awareness in us – about who we are and our eternal and special relationship with Sri Hari - this is diksha. Then again, the mantra is non-different from the Lord. By the grace of the pure devotees and the Spiritual Master, who are the condensed form of Sri Hari's mercy, the Lord enters the disciple's heart in the form of mantra to make his body, mind, and life-airs transcendently suitable for serving the Lord. Sriman-Mahaprabhu has said with His holy lips-

"At the time of initiation the devotee surrenders himself and at that time Sri Krishna makes him His own. The Lord then makes the devotee's body transcendental and in this transcendental body the devotee serves His lotus feet."

– (C. C.)"

(Sri Srimat Ananta das Babaji)

When Sri Gurudeva sees a disciple fit and qualified, he will reveal to him or her (the soul is anyway female!) the transcendental body, suitable to the jiva-soul's mood.

Gurudeva goes into deep meditation and meets with a form of Krishna, called the samasthi-Guru. This form of Krishna reveals to Sri Gurudeva the spiritual body with everything to it (name, form, age...in short: ekadasa-bhava), which is "waiting there" for the jiva-soul.

By the power of pure bhakti, the heart of the jiva-soul becomes purer and purer and finally the jiva-soul is able to "see" its eternal form, the siddha-deha. Again, we can listen to Sri Srimat Ananta das Babaji:

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What is the siddha-deha?

‘Siddha-deha’ means the body that our Spiritual Master gives us and we meditate on it. Srimat Jiva Goswamipad says – ‘siddha deha’ is the body that is worthy of serving Sri Krishna.

Srila Vishwanath Chakravartipad has said – ‘siddha-deha’ is the body that is worthy of serving Sri Sri Radha-Krishna in reality (sakshat seva). By using the word ‘sakshat’ he is indicating that when a jiva-soul meditates on the siddha-deha, then Sri Krishna accepts the seva in truth.

In Raganuga-bhakti when a jiva-soul has not reached the stage of rati (passion), then he deliberately meditates that he is serving the Divine Couple with siddha-deha; however when a jiva-soul attains the level of rati, he identifies naturally with his siddha-deha.

The siddha-deha that the jiva-soul meditates on is not imaginary. It is the supreme truth, eternal, blissful and conscious. Some people think that although the soul is originally spiritual, it is infinitesimally small; hence the jiva-soul has to meditate upon an imaginary body.

He pleases Sri Bhagavan by his sadhana and then following the rule – ‘yadrishi bhavaana yasya siddhirbhavaati tadrishi’

– Sri Bhagavan converts the jiva-soul’s soul into His associate. So the message is that, although later on the siddha-deha does exist (as Sri Bhagavan’s associate), just now it is imaginary. This means, we are meditating on a make-believe image. This is not a Vaishnava-conclusion.

The siddha-deha of the jiva-soul is a beautiful treasure of the eternal divine abode and it is permanent. All the siddha-dehas are conscious, blissful and is in the mode of especially pure goodness. We see in Srimad-Bhagavatam – “vasanti yatra purushah sarve vaikuntha-murtayah.”

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"Innumerable bodies are present in the divine Vaikuntha. They are parts of Sri Bhagavan's effulgence and are the precious and beautiful treasure of the Holy Abode."

Sri Gurudev is Sri Bhagavan's intense compassion personified. He knows our siddha-deha by the power of his meditation. Then he reveals to us our siddha-deha. We should meditate on this divine body and think "I am this divine body". Such meditation is called "meditating on siddha-deha".

So we should note that our sadhana does NOT create the siddha-deha. It is already there. When we accomplish success in bhakti and we become worthy of serving Sri Bhagavan in reality, we become blessed and get the opportunity to serve the Divine Couple in our siddha-deha. Hence it is imperative that we follow the Siddha-pranali received in the Guru-parampara and perform sadhana accordingly. We should meditate on that siddha-deha which we receive in Sri Guruparampara.

And that which Sri Gurudev has given us.

Lord Sadashiva has instructed us in Sri Sanatkumar-Sambita how to meditate:

"The Brajasundaris who are in parakiya-bhava, give immense pleasure to their Beloved Sri Krishna according to their bhava. Similarly, you too consider yourself as a Gopa-maiden and serve in subordination to their bhava. You are a maidservant amongst the Gopa-damsels. How will you meditate on this self? You will think – 'I am an extremely attractive maiden brimming with beauty, youth and sensuousness. I am a Gopa-girl and experienced in many arts regarding Sri Krishna's seva. I am Srimati Radharani's eternal companion and follower.' Your loving seva lies in uniting Srimati Radharani with Sri Krishna and your happiness lies therein. If Sri Krishna ever begs you for love-making, you will refuse, since you are

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Sri Radha's maid servant and you feel joy in making her happy. In this manner you will serve Srimati Radharani eternally and love Her more than Sri Krishna. You will serve Her during all eight parts of the day and unite Her with Sri Krishna. Thus you will submerge in the joy of seva. You will serve right from the Brahma-muhurta till the end of the night."

Those of us who cannot see the siddha-deha clearly, or do lila-smaran conspicuously – rather they even find it laborious – it is better if they are not over-enthusiastic about meditating on siddha-deha and practicing lila-smaran. It is better if they hear from the holy lips of the great devotees about the divine pastimes. Then they should read lots about the glory of Gopi-bhava, repeat them and say lalasamayi prayers that crave for such bhava. They should try to practice very little Gopi-bhava in the form of remembering and thinking. If they perform bhajana like this, then gradually they will be able to meditate nicely on their siddha-deha and they will be qualified to meditate on the pastimes of the Divine Couple. They will also be able to meditate on the loving seva of the Divine Couple in the correct manner. "

(Sri Srimat Ananta das Babaji)

In the book of Sri Srimat Kunja Bihari das Babaji, Manjari Svarupa Nirupana, we find the following wonderful explanation:

About the spiritual body

In the tenth section of the Pṛiti-sandarbha, Jīva Gosvami writes:

"In the spiritual world, the Supreme Lord has unlimited spiritual forms, all are expansions of himself illuminating that world. With

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each one of those forms, the Lord enjoys pastimes with a single individual liberated soul.”

These liberated souls therefore have spiritual bodies like that of the Lord. In the Lord’s abode, there are an unlimited number of forms, all suitable for rendering service to him. Every one of those forms is non-different from him, being expanded from his effulgence; each one is eternal, full of consciousness and bliss. They are the crowning central jewels of the spiritual world—its very life.

These unlimited spiritual bodies are the perfected forms of the liberated souls which are awarded to an individual, according to his taste, when he reaches the state of absolute liberation. This state is called attainment of the spiritual body. All these spiritual bodies are eternal for they exist even before the liberated souls enter them and will continue to exist ever afterward. However, prior to the entry of the liberated soul they are in an from our limited perspective, inactive state.

As all of the unlimited souls are servants of the Lord, each one of them has a spiritual body in the Lord’s abode just suitable for rendering service to the Lord. When an individual becomes qualified for direct service to the Lord by the grace of the Goddess of Devotion, then the Supreme Lord awards him that spiritual body.

A good friend of mine has compiled a variety of statements about the principle of siddha-pranali:

“The system of spiritual practices, followed by the Gaudiya Vaishnava-school, call for the practitioner to receive siddha-pranali from his spiritual master. A siddha-pranali consists of the guru-pranali, a channel of gurus, in their siddha-forms (manjari-svarupas). One’s own guru, his guru, and the subsequent gurus traced back to the associates of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu form the guru-pranali, or guru-parampara.

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In due course of time, a guru in the Gaudiya Vaishnava sampradaya reveals the details of his own siddha-form, of the siddha-forms of the preceding gurus, and of the siddha-form of the sadhaka to the qualified practitioner.

This is popularly called the giving of siddhapranali, as the initiate becomes the last link in a channel of manjaris preserved over the generations from a guru to a disciple.

The concept of siddha-rupa in the realm of Gaudiya-theology makes its famous appearance in Sri Rupa Gosvami's Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu, in a section where the practice of raganuga-bhakti-sadhana is explained.

*seva sadhaka-rupena siddha-rupena catra hi
tad-bhava lipsuna karya vraja-lokanusaratah*
- BRS 1.2.295

“One should serve both in his present sadhaka-form and in his siddha-form, following in the wake of the residents of Vraca, desiring to have feelings similar to theirs.”

Or as Sri Jiva Goswami has explained:

*kecid ashtadasakshara-dhyananam go-dohana-samaya-vamsi-vadya-
samakrishta-tattat-sarvamayatvena bhavayanti
yattha caike tadrism upasananam sakshad vrajajana-viseshayaiva
malyam sri-guru-caranair mad-abhishta-visesha-siddhy-artham
upadishtam bhavayami*
- Bhakti-sandarbha 312

“Some, while remembering the eighteen-syllable mantra, meditate on the pastimes of tending cows and playing flute, becoming attracted and absorbed in them. In such upasana (worship), in order to attain my specifically desired perfection, I should meditate on that very form of a resident of Vraca my revered guru has instructed me in.”

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This manner of atma-dhyana (self-meditation) is further explained in the Sanat-kumarSambita, as cited by Srila Thakura Mahasaya in his Prema-bhakti-candrika:

*sakhinam sangini-rupam atmanam vasanamayim
ajna-seva-param tat-tad-rupalankara-bhushitam*
- Prema Bbhakti Chandrika verse 58

“One should meditate on oneself in a form that is a female associate of the sakhis, engaged in services on their command, decorated by Her ornaments.”

Sri Visvanatha Cakravartipada comments in his tika as follows:

*sakhinam sri-lalita-sri-rupa-manjary-adinam sangini-rupam
atmanam dhyayed iti seshah kimbhutam? ajna-seva-param ajnaya
tasam anumatya seva-param sri-riadha-madbavayor iti seshah punah
kimbhutam? tat-tad-rupalankarabhushtam suprasiddha-sri-krishna-
manohara-rupena sri-radhikanirmalyalankarena bhushitam
nirmalya-malya-vasana-bharanas tu dasya ity ukteh punah
kimbhutam? vasanamayim cintamayim ikshate cintamayam etam
isvaram ity adivat*
- verse 58

“One should think of himself as a female associate of sakhis such as Sri Lalita, Sri Rupa Manjari and others. In which way? Ajna-sevaparam - Serving Sri Radha-Madhava with their consent and according to their orders. And again, in which way? Tat-tad rupalankara bhushitam - Decorated with an exquisite form captivating the mind of Sri Krishna and the left-over ornaments of Sri Radhika; in service, ornamented with the left-over flower garlands.

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Thus it is said. And again, in which way? Vasanamayim - Seeing oneself in contemplation in this capacity; and so forth.

In the spiritual realm there are infinite siddha-rupas, each reserved for one individual jiva.

*vaikunthasya bhagavato jyotir-amsa-bhuta vaikuntha-loka-sobha-
rupa ya ananta murtayas tatra vartante, tasam ekaya saha
muktasyaikasya murtir bhagavata kriyata iti vaikuntasya murtir iva
murtir yesham ity uktam*

- Pritisandarba 10

“In the spiritual world, the Supreme Lord has unlimited spiritual forms; they all are expansions of Himself illuminating that world. With each one of those forms, the Lord enjoys pastimes with a single individual liberated soul.”

The siddha-deha one longs to attain is not a figment of imagination; it is one among the infinite siddha-rupas in the spiritual realm. In fact, beyond being expansions of bhagavanthe sakhi-gana with their various svabhavas are expansions of Sri Radha. As in the Chaitanya Caritamrīta:

*akara svabhava-bhede vraja-devi-gana
kaya-vyuha-rupa tantra rasera karana*
- CC 1.1.79

“The multitude of Vraja-gopis have various natures (svabhava). They are the forms of Her bodily expansions (kaya-vyuha-rupa) and Her instruments for creating rasa.”

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The one desirous for service in the wake of the sakhis will certainly be granted an appropriate form for such service.

*vrāja-lokera kona bhava lana yei bhaje
bhava-yoga deha pana krishna paya vrāje*
- CC2.8.122

“Whoever accepts the bhava of the residents of Vrāja, engaging in bhajana appropriate for that bhava, will receive a body suitable for it, attaining Sri Krishna in Vrāja.”

This is accomplished through Sri Guru, the Lord’s able agent in this world. The guru, being the bhagavat-kripa-svarūpa (a form of the Lord’s mercy), by dint of empowerment received from him, has the insight to reveal the various details of the siddha-rūpa of the disciple.”

Again we can find in the book “Manjari Svarupa Nirupana” the following information:

From this siddha-pranali, the disciple becomes aware of the nature of his spiritual body. Dhyana-candra Gosvami writes in his Paddhati that the siddha-pranali has eleven aspects (ekadasa-bhava).

No one should think that this is nothing more than imagination; the spiritual body is eternal and true. The spiritual master knows his disciple’s transcendental identification through the power of his meditation and then reveals it to him as the form in which he will be accepted by the Lord. When the disciple meditates on the transcendental activities of the Lord through a sense of identification with that spiritual body, mentally serving the Holy Couple in that body, then gradually his absorption in identification with the material body is correspondingly reduced.

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Narottama Dasa Thakura has said:

“That which you think of during your practice is the very thing that will be attained at the time of perfection. It is only a question of its ripening : when one’s desires have ripened he attains prema-bhakti, and for as long as they are unripe he remains on the platform of practice. This is the essence of understanding the truth about pure devotional service.”

The Lord also states in the Bhagavad-gita:

‘Whatever one happens to be thinking of at the time of departing from this body will determine the state to which he will attain in his next birth, for one’s desires do not leave him at that time, but remain and determine his future life.’

Until the disciple comes to the point of prema, he does not actually attain this siddha-deha, but has to take repeated births in the material world. Vishvanatha Cakravarti explains in his commentary on the Ujjvala-nilamani, ‘Those persons who are practicing raganuga-bhakti

At the present time are on various stages of advancement such as nishta, ruci, asakti,etc.

If they should at any future lifetime attain to pure love (prema) then they will become fully qualified to serve the Lord. It is only then that they will receive a body appropriate for rendering such service and will become actual associates of the Lord.”

The process for achievement is as follows, according to Vishvanatha Cakravartipad:

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“Such a practitioner of raganuga-bhakti, when he finally attains prema due to his dedicated performance of sadhana and is completely absorbed in the anxiety of desire, even though he has not attained the higher stages of love of God, such as sneha, etc. (which are actually impossible to attain in a material body), then the Lord himself appears along with his eternal associates and gives a direct vision of himself as well as the opportunity to engage in direct service—even if only once in a dream. Then he gives a spiritual body (in this case, the body of a gopi) just in the way one was given to Narada Muni at the time of his death. After that, when the Lord makes his appearance in some material universe, his internal potency, Yogamaya, causes that very body to be born in the womb of some gopi in the Vrindavana of that world. Then in that body, the higher stages of prema are realizable by the devotee.”

Thus Narottama Dasa Thakura prays:

“When will I take birth as a daughter in the house of Abira Gopa, and when will I be married in the village of Yavat.”

Prema descends into the heart of the jiva-soul and all anarthas will be removed in due course of time and at the stage of asakti and then on bhava, glimpses of that siddha-deha will appear and the jiva-soul will “perform” seva in this spiritual body...this is the zenith of bhakti.

“Whenever a practitioner of raganuga-bhakti attains prema (which causes the experience of internal and external full spiritual bliss, direct meeting with the Lord and the direct apprehension or appreciation of his all-attractive qualities) then he goes and takes birth in the womb of a gopi in some material universe where the Lord’s activities are being performed. “

- (Manjari Svarupa Nirupana, Sri Srimat Kunja Bihari das Babaji)

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8. Through humility we receive

Recently I was meditating a lot about this most essential verse of the Caitanya Caritamrita:

*nitya-siddha krsna-prema sadhya kabhu naya
sravanadi-suddha-citte karaye udaya*

This verse has such a fantastically deep meaning. Actually, each word is perfectly chosen.

Nitya - eternal, siddha - perfect, krishna prema - pure love for Krishna, sadhya - to be gained, kabhu - at any time, naya - never, sravanadi - hearing and the other angas of bhakti (sravana + adi), suddha - pure, citte - consciousness/heart, karaye udaya - there it arises.

Since the meaning is very deep, it allows also very deep meanings.

A truly literal translation would be:

"Krishna-prema is eternal and it is perfect. It is never 'to be attained' (by any sadhana). When the heart is purified by sravana and so forth (hearing, chanting, etc), it (this Krishna-prema) arises."

So here "nitya" and "siddha" describe "Krishna-prema", stating, that this pure love of Krishna is eternal and perfect.

Another very deep and equally fitting meaning runs as follows (translated by my beloved Gurudeva):

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"We can never receive the eternal love for Sri Krishna that His eternal associates possess by means of any spiritual practice. When our heart becomes clean due to hearing, etc...it manifests itself."

Here, "nitya" belongs to "siddha" and we arrive at the "nitya siddhas", the eternal associates of Sri Krishna. This meaning actually adds more beauty to the first translation.

What kind of "eternal" and "perfect" Krishna-prema? Only the prema of the eternal associates is eternal and perfect. They are called ragatmika-devotees: perfect RAGA in their ATMA. We are raganuga-devotees, we follow the ragatmika-devotees.

So, pure Krishna-prema comes down from the eternal spiritual world like the river Ganges and it flows through a riverbed made of the hearts of pure Vaishnavas who form a guru-parampara.

In Srila Rupa Goswami's "Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu", we find the following line:

"*kṛti-sādhyā bhavet sādhyā-bhāvā sā sādhanābhidhā
nitya-siddhasya bhāvasya prākātyam hrdi sādhyata*"
- Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, Purva-vibhaga 2.2

"Action of the senses, which produces the stage of bhava, is called sadhana-bhakti. This attained stage of bhava-bhakti is an eternal bhava (mood of love) which is never created, but simply MANIFESTS by the spiritual energy of the Lord."

Srila Jiva Goswami addresses a common doubt in this verse:

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"A doubt may arise that since this state is achieved (sadhya), thereby meaning that it is artificially produced or created, it is not the ultimate goal.

The second line here (nitya-siddhasya...) responds to this doubt by saying that it is indeed eternal and simply appears within the purified heart. That is because its appearance (NOT IT'S CREATION) will be accomplished in the future by the special actions of the most excellent transformations (samvit- and hladini-sakti) of the Lord's inner potency/svarupa-sakti (which are perfect and eternal)."

The word "nitya-siddha" means nitya-siddha bhaktas according to Mukunda Goswami in his comment on this verse:

nitya-siddha-bhaktesu śuddha-sattva-viśesa-rūpatayā sadā
vartamānasyātra svayam sphuranān na krtrimatva-śankā |
atah śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ
[bha.ra.si. 1.2.234] iti vaksyamanatvāt | sādhana-bhaktir eva
na krtrimā, kim uta bhāvah –

"The pure sattva which is ever present in the nitya siddha devotees manifests itself and thus should not be seen as artificial. This can be seen in verse 1.2.234, atah śrī kṛṣṇa nāmādi.

Surely sādhana bhakti is not artificial, what to speak of bhāva.

So we are told that this pure love is appearing in the heart by the workings of bhakti, which is a combination of the samvit- and the hladini-sakti.

And who possesses this fantastic Krishna-prema to the utmost degree? Krishna's beloved associates in Vrindavana, most of all the gopis and topmost of all, Srimati Radhika.

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She is the personification of this highest Krishna-prema.
She loves Krishna more than Her own life.

Prema is the purest and most selfless form of love. It is the essence of the pleasure-potency of Krishna.

krishnendriya-priti-ichchha
dhare 'prema' nama
- (Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita)

"The desire to gratify Krishna's senses is called prema."

Love is the topmost manifestation of the hladini-shakti. Hladini is pure transcendental goodness and love is its characteristic. When we perform bhajan and we get Sri Bhagavan's blessing then our heart becomes clean. It is now ready to receive pure transcendental goodness. Then Sri Krishna flings hladini-shakti into our heart.

When we put an iron rod in fire, it gains the property of the fire – that is – it becomes red in colour and hot to touch. Similarly, our heart becomes one with pure transcendental goodness and gets its characteristics.

Now pure transcendental goodness starts expressing its qualities through our mind. Its main quality is 'a desire to please Sri Krishna's senses'. This is love.

So, the first part "nitya-siddha krishna-prema" has been explained and the most wonderful meaning revealed.

We are extremely fortunate. Eternal and perfect love for Sri Krishna in the mood of His dear most beloveds in Vrindavana can be infused in our heart. It is such a merciful gift.

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When we realize, that we are actually suffering in this material world since beginnless time, and by the incredible mercy of the Lord, we can experience the true Krishna-prema of the nitya-siddhas.

Through this realization, humility spreads in our proud and envious heart. Our hearts melt by recognizing the all-merciful Lord and His eternal beloveds.

As jivas, we belong to the tatastha-sakti and as such we have the potential to "receive" this most wonderful energy of bhakti. It is not dormant in our hearts.

Sri Jiva Goswamipada in his Bhakti Sandarbha (Anuccheda 142) writes:

"Bhakti is the supreme aspect of this internal potency known as *hlādinī*. The Lord remains eternally situated in His fullness while transmitting this potency of bhakti to His own devotees. Then by contact with His own bliss-giving potency in the form of bhakti situated in His devotees, He experiences still greater delight."

In the Visnu Purana (1.12.69), we can find:

hlādinī sandhinī samvit tvayi ekā sarva-samśraye
hlāda-tāpa-karī miśrā tvayi no guna-varjite

The one energy, having the three divisions of *hlādinī* (bliss), *sandhinī* (eternal existence) and *samvit* (knowing), exists only in You, the support of everything. But the energy that yields material happiness, misery and their mixture, does not abide in You, because You are free from the gunas.

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Śrīdhara Svāmī comments on this verse:

"Hlādinī bestows delight, sandhinī is existence, and samvit is the cognitive potency. Ekā ('one') means predominant, undeviating, and intrinsic to the Lord's essential nature. This energy is present in You only, the support of everything (sarva-samsthiti), or in other words, the one from whom all things come into being. This potency, however, is not present in the living beings. And the energy consisting of the three material gunas, which is present in the living beings, is not in You."

Srila Jiva Goswamipada also tells us in the above mentioned Bhakti Sandarbha that actually, "God's mercy is secondary."

He makes the point clear that it is the mercy of the devotee who is the primary reason for Krishna-prema to appear in our heart.

Sri Caitanya-Caritamrta gloriously proclaims:

sadhu-sanga, sadhu-sanga — sarva-sastre kaya
lava-matra sadhu-sange sarva-siddhi haya

"The verdict of all revealed scriptures is that by even a moment's association with a pure devotee, one can attain all success."

The mercy of the devotees is the key to all success.

Krishna says Himself in the Bhagavad-gita that we should HUMBLY approach a Sri Gurudeva and that we should submissively ask him question about bhakti-tattva.

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Without the mercy of the devotees, and now much more precisely, without the mercy of Sri Gurudeva, we can never attain the highest goal Krishna-prema.

yasya prasadad bhagavat-prasado
yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto 'pi
dhyayan stuvams tasya yashas trisandhyam
vande guroh sri-charanaravindam

"By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Krsna. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement. Therefore, I should always remember and praise the spiritual master. At least three times a day I should offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master."

Sri Gurudeva plants into our heart the seed of bhakti.

guru krsna prasāde pāy bhakti latā bīja.

'We receive the seed of devotion by the grace of Guru and Krishna'.

When we realize how utterly dependent we are on the mercy of Krishna and especially of the devotees, we become more and more humble.

We realize the second important part of this magnificent verse:

No matter how much sadhana-bhakti we perform, this eternal and perfect Krishna-prema cannot be "manufactured".

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The sole purpose of our sadhana-bhakti is to turn the heart into a wonderful throne on which Krishna-prema can sit upon.

When we think that we can "achieve" anything in bhakti, we act in pride and we think that we are the "doers".

When we think that we can only clean our hearts to make Krishna-prema feel welcome to stay, we act in true humility.

It is said that when the "citta" (consciousness/heart) is pure, Krishna-prema will descend into it.

But this doesn't mean that FIRST we have to become pure, THEN bhakti or prema will descend.

bhaktes tu 'vikriditam vrajavadhubhiih' ityadau—
bhaktim param bhagavati pratilabhyam kamam hrid rogam
asvapahinotyacirena dhirah
(bhag. 10.33.39)

ityatra 'ktva' pratyayena hrid roga-vadhi-karini paramaya
api tasyah prathamam eva pravesas tatas tayaiva parama
svatantraya kamadinam apagamas ca. tesham kadacit
satv'e'pi 'api cet suduracaro bhajate mam' iti
'badhyamano'pi mad bhakta' ityadibhis ca tadvatam na
kvapi sastreshu ninda leso'pi. ajamila-sya bhaktatvam
vishnudutair nirupitam. 'sanketa bhagavanna-ma putra
snehanushangajam ityadi drishtya tad abhasavatam
apyajamila-dinam bhaktatvam sarvaih sangitam eva' tad
evam karma yogadina-m antah karana suddhi dravya desa
suddhyadaya-h sadhakas tad vaigunya-dayo badhaka bhaktis
tu prana dayin-yeveti. sarvatha paratantryam eva tesham.
nahi svatantrah kenapi sadhyante badhyante veti.

- (Madhurya Kadambini)

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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.

Srimad-Bhagavata (10.33.39) says:

“A person who faithfully hears or describes the Lord’s pastimes of rasa-lila with the gopis 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.”

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.

The messengers of Vishnu judged Ajamila as a devotee. From sastric evidence it is seen, “Ajamila uttered the name of the Lord, though he was calling his son’s name out of affection.” Uttering of the Lord’s name by Ajamila was just an abhasa (glimpse). He did not chant the Lord’s name, but merely used it to call his own son named Narayana. Still, he is glorified as a devotee by all. With karma-yoga and jnana-yoga, perfection depends on purity of heart, materials, place, and so on.

Purity of all these factors assists in attaining the fruits of karma and jnana.

Their lack obstructs the attainment of their respective

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fruits.

Bhakti, however, infuses life in them. Karma, jnana, and yoga are always dependent on bhakti, and they are never independent. They are nourished by certain factors and obstructed by others.

There are many stages on the way to the highest stage of bhakti.

Actually, bhakti starts to appear in our hearts and by this appearance all unwanted things will disappear and finally it will turn from sadhana-bhakti to bhava-bhakti into the highest bhakti, prema-bhakti.

guru-padashrayas tasmat krsna-diksadi-siksanam |
vishrambhena guroh seva sadhu-vartmanuvartanam

|| 74 ||

- Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu

- (1) Submission to the Feet of the Guru (Spiritual Master);
- (2) Receiving diksha from him and advices for practices regarding Sri Krishna; (3) serving the Spiritual Master with affectionate zeal; (4) Following in the path of saints

These are the first steps in bhakti.

When we perform what is mentioned in our verse as "sravanadi", hearing and chanting and so on, and when we are always in the shelter of the lotus feet of Sri Guru, this eternal and perfect love will arise in our heart.

In the line of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, our Gurudeva will infuse us with the highest love possible: the love of the manjaris of Srimati Radhika.

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This eternal Krishna-prema, straight from the heart of Srimati Radhika will flow into the container of our heart.

But this container must not have holes in it. The holes are made by our offences (APA-RADHA = we kick Radhika). Our container can never have holes when it is built from a very special material: HUMILITY.

We are only depending on mercy, KRIPA. We are spiritual beggars.

Receiving can only happen through true humility.

trnad api su-nicena
taror iva sahisnuna
amanina mana-dena
kirtaniyah sada harih

"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,
he can very easily and always chant the holy name of the
Lord."

9. Worship Krishna for the service to Radhka - our inner mood

**VERSE 259 of Sri Sri Radha Rasa Sudhanidhi by
Sripad Prabhodhananda Sarasvati:**

DHYAYAMS TAM SIKHI PINCHA MAULIM ANISAM TAN NAMA SANKIRTAYAN
NITYAM TAC CARANAMBUJAM PARICARAMS TAN MANTRA VARYAM JAPAN
SRI RADHA PADA DASYAM EVA PARAMABHISHTAM HRIDA DHARAYAN
KARHI SYAM TAD ANUGRAHEN PARAMODBHUTANURAGOTSAVAH

dhyayam - meditating; tam - on him; sikhi pincha
maulim - with a crown of peacockfeathers; anisam -
always; tad - his; nama - name; sankirtayan -
congregational chanting; nityam - eternally; tat - his;
caranambujam - lotus feet; paricaram - worshiping;
tad - his; mantra varya - best of mantras; japan -
muttering; sri radha pada dasyam - the service of Sri
Radha's feet; eva - only; parama - highest; abhishtam -
aspiration; hrida - in the heart; dharayan - holding;
karhi syam - when; tad - her; anugrahena - by the
mercy; parama - highest; udbhuta - creating; anuraga -
constant passion; utsavah - festival.

I always meditate on Krishna, Who wears a crown of peacock feathers, I always sing His name in sankirtana, I always serve His lotus feet (the deity) and repeat His best of mantras, holding the desire for the supremely cherished service of Sri Radha's lotus feet in my heart. When will that great festival of divine love arise in my heart by His grace?

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WORSHIPING SRI KRISHNA FOR SRI RADHA'S SERVICE

Commentary by Srila Ananta das Babaji:

Sripada continues his prayers in sadhakavesa for Sri Radha's maidservice. It is for the sake of attaining Sri Radha's service alone that he worships Krishna, not independently:

amara isvari hon vrindavanesvari; tara prananatha boli bhaji
giridhari

"My mistress is the queen of Vrindavana (Radha) and I worship Giridhari (only) because He is the Lord of Her life."

This is the slogan of the radha-snehadhika devotees.

Sripada says: "I worship Krishna, who wears a peacock feather, only to please Radha. I will see in my meditation that I am serving Radhika in a solitary grove in Vrindavana and that She will be angry with Krishna for being a little too late for His appointment with Her. I will then see in my meditation how Krishna makes His peacock feather crown roll on the ground before Her feet, just to pacify Her pique. To meditate on Krishna in this way is the greatest festival of anuraga for me".

In the same way I will always loudly chant Krishna's holy name together with Radha's holy name, holding the most cherished maidservice of Sri Radha in my heart. This chanting will cause a festival of anuraga to appear in the heart.

Srila Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami similarly prayed:

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radheti nama nava sundara sidhu mugdham krishneti nama
madhuradbhuta gadha dugdham
sarvakshanam surabhi raga himena ramyam kritva tad eva
piba me rasane kshudharte

"O tongue suffering from thirst! Please mix the delicious nectar of the name Radha with the wonderfully sweet condensed milk of the name Krishna, add the fragrant ice of pure love and drink this charming drink at every moment!"

Sripada says:

"I will always serve Krishna's lotus feet (the deity) and I will worship my Isvari with the remnants of His food, His chewed betel leaves and His flower garlands. I will always mutter His best of mantras (the eighteen-syllable gopi jana vallabha mantra), so that my mind (man) will be saved (tra) from bodily consciousness and I will become absorbed in thinking of my manjari svarupa. This very enthusiastic Krishna-bhajana will swiftly make me attain the most cherished treasure of Sri Radhika's maidservice!

amara paramabhishta, radha pada dasye nishtha,
dasyamrita praptira karana
sikhi pincha mauli syama, satata koribo dhyana,
syama nama koribo kirtana

"For the sake of attaining establishment in the most cherished nectarean service of Radhika's lotus feet I will always meditate on Syama, who wears a crown of peacock feathers, and I will always chant Syama's holy name."

syamera sri padapadma, arcana koribo nitya,
mantra raja japibo sadaya

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triloke paramadbhuta, anuraga premotsava,
labhya hobe syamera kripaya

"I will always worship Syama's lotus feet and murmur His best of mantras. By Syama's grace I will attain the great festival of spontaneous love that is the most astonishing thing in all the three worlds."

radhara kinkari pada, sudurlabha se sampad,
lokatita parama ananda,
bhane sri prabodhananda, bhagye mile se ananda,
kripa koile nandakula canda

Sri Prabodhananda sings:

"It is by great fortune and by the grace of Krishna, the moon of king Nanda's dynasty, that I can attain the limit of transcendental ecstasy, the rarely attained treasure of Radha's maidservice."

10. The glories of Srimati Radhika's maidservants (manjaris)

Nowadays, many devotees are primarily concerned with the external reason of the appearance of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, which consists of introducing the yuga-dharma for this age (Kali-yuga), the chanting of the Holy Name and the spreading of bhakti-yoga aka Krishna-consciousness, which in itself is most wonderful.

But actually, Sriman Mahaprabhu appeared mainly because of his inner reason(s): to know what the nature of Radha's love is, what is the extent of his own sweetness, and what is the nature of the happiness that Radha experiences in her love for him). We should focus more and more on this inner reason(s).

Tasting the fulfillment of these three inner desires, he also distributed that very same love to every jiva-soul. Such a most precious gift had never ever been given before Sriman Mahaprabhu's time.

To really understand this most merciful gift, it is very helpful to know why this kind of love is so absolutely wonderful.

Sriman Mahaprabhu came to engage us in “radha-dasyam”. This means that our sole aim is not to please Sri Krishna, but to please Srimati Radharani.

By this wonderful service (dasyam), Sri Krishna is automatically pleased to the utmost extent.

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Our goal is to become Radhika´s shadow by engaging in a very special kind of sadhana: manjari-bhava-sadhana.

We try to follow in the footsteps of the eternally perfect manjaris in the spiritual world and we always are under the guidance of Sri Rupa Manjari and our Guru-manjari.

Externally we follow Srila Rupa Goswami and internally we follow Sri Rupa Manjari.

“Before the stage of rati, we have to consciously meditate on our spiritual manjari-form and at the stage of rati, we automatically are in our spiritual manjari-consciousness.”
(Srila Ananta das Babaji)

My Param-Gurudeva, Srila Kunjabihari das Babaji wrote a most excellent book on this topic. It is called “Manjari Svarupa Nirupana”.

In the 3rd chapter, he expertly explains why the gift of Sriman Mahaprabhu is so utterly beautiful.

When we study the book and especially this chapter, we learn about the uniqueness of the love of Radhika´s manjaris.

By the mercy of Sriman Mahaprabhu, we are blessed to engage in this most wonderful bhakti known as raganuga-bhakti: Love following in the wake of the inhabitants of Vrindavana, more precisely in the wake of the manjaris of Radhika.

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From "Manjari Svarupa Nirupana" by Srila Kunjabihari das Babaji:

Radharani's girlfriends

3.1 The Spirit of Radharani's girlfriends

In the previous chapter, the sthayi-bhava of Krishna's mistresses was described in extenso. Here we turn to the dominant mood of affection of Radha's girlfriends and its various divisions.

Tad-bhavetchatmika bhakti is defined as a type of devotion that is saturated with the desire to realize the fullness of the sweet mood which succeeds in winning the interest of the lover and his beloved, because it finds extreme joy in helping Radha and Krishna's other leading ladies enjoy erotic dalliances with him and takes pleasure in seeing their fulfillment. This mood (bhava) is also called the mood of the girlfriends (sakhi-bhava).

Sakhi-bhava means unqualified love for the leading lady or yuthesvari. That love is without limit and is free from even the slightest touch of selfishness, to the extent that the sakhi thinks that the leading lady is dearer to her than her own life or her own self.

The essence of sakhi-bhava is trust, or visrambha, which Jiva Gosvamin has further defined as meaning a feeling of mutual identity.¹¹⁴

As a result of maintaining this intimate trust, the sakhis are able to understand the nayika spontaneously, without her having to say anything, or make the slightest hint or gesture.

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Kavi Karnapura has also defined the sakhi in the following way:

Those who are dedicated with an untainted love, who feel happiness and distress in accordance with the moods of the nayika, and who are similar to her in age and temperament, and are thus able to know her heart, are called sakhis.¹¹⁵

Rupa Gosvamin's definition is found in Ujjvala-nilamani:

Those who sincerely feel greater love for each other than they do for even themselves, who have intimate confidence in one another, and who are equal in age, dress, talent, beauty and temperament, are known as sakhis.¹¹⁶

In the chapter treating the subject of the sakhi in the same book, Rupa Goswami writes: The sakhis are the perfect expanders of the loving affairs and intrigues of the Divine Couple and are veritable treasure chests of the rare and valuable secret jewels of faith and trust.¹¹⁷

The nayika's mood is one of desiring to give pleasure to her lover (nayaka) by serving him with every limb of her own body. The sakhi's mood is one of desiring especially for the union of the lover and his mistress, the nayaka and the nayika. The nayika is her friend and by giving her pleasure in this way, she achieves her own plentitude and perfection. This is the difference between the two types of gopis participating in the creation of erotic sacred rapture.

The worshipable object of Srimati Radharani and the other leading lady-loves of the Lord is Sri Krishna alone and no other.

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On the other hand, the sakhis have the feature of wanting to see Krishna with Srimati Radharani (or some other nayika, as the case may be).

As Narottama Das Thakur has put it, “My life and soul are the Divine Couple, Radha and Krishna.” The purpose of this work is to explain sakhi-bhava specifically where the nayika is Srimati Radharani.

There are primarily three divisions amongst Radha's girlfriends.

Some are **equal in their affection for both Krishna and his mistress, others lean toward Krishna, while others are more sympathetic to Radha.**

The sakhis belonging to this last category are otherwise known as manjaris.

No matter how intense the feeling of friendship the manjaris have for Radha, their special interest is to exclusively serve the Divine Couple. This is their life; it is as if their feelings of intimate friendship and servitude have merged. It is as though their friendship has become the manifestation of their service and their service identified with their friendship.

In his Stavavali, Srila Raghunatha Dasa Gosvamin expresses this feeling of dedication to Radha's service in the following famous prayer:

O Goddess! I pray for nothing from you at any time other than single-minded service to your lotus feet. If you should say, “Become my friend, my equal,” then my answer is, “I offer eternal obeisances to such friendship. I bow down to it, but in truth I pray that my taste for being your hand-maid should ever

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increase, yes, increase forever. This is my prayer, and this is my vow.¹¹⁸

3.2 The five divisions of sakhi-bhava

The above-mentioned general division of sakhi-bhava has been further subdivided into five in the Ujjvala-nilamani. There it is said that Radharani, queen of Vrindavan, has five kinds of sakhi, known respectively as sakhi (friends), priya-sakhi (dear friends), parama- preshtha-sakhi (dearmost friends), prana-sakhi (life-companions) and nitya-sakhi (constant companions).¹¹⁹

In this classification, sakhis are those inclined primarily toward Krishna; they include Dhanishtha and Vindhya. Priya-sakhis and parama-preshtha-sakhis are equal in their affections to both the lover and the beloved; Kurangakshi and Sumadhyama belong to the former grouping, while Radha's closest companions—Lalita, Visakha, Campakalata, Sucitra, Indulekha, Tungavidya, Rangadevi and Sudevi (often known as the eight friends, or ashta-sakhi) belong to the latter. Their title of parama-preshtha-sakhi would indicate that they are the dearest of all to Radha. The last two categories, which include the manjaris, are Radha-snehadhika, i.e., they have stronger feelings of love for Radha than for Krishna. Kasturi and Mani Manjaris' names are specifically mentioned in the Ujjvala-nilamani as nitya-sakhis, while Sasimukhi, Vasanti and Lasika are the names of some prana-sakhis.

3.21 Krishna-snehadhika

Srila Visvanatha Cakravartipada has discussed raganuga bhakti and the different categories of sakhi in his Ananda-candrika commentary to Ujjvala-nilamani:

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In the opinion of those devoted to the raganuga path, one must follow a specific gopi with a feeling of submission at least equal to the one with which one worships Krishna. Therefore, if one follows with less affection for the devotee, then there is no distinction between the vaidha and raganuga paths, for one cannot attain the desired result of raganuga-bhakti without following in the footsteps of one of the Vrindavan devotees. In this case, though, if one adores a girlfriend of Radha's whose affections lean proportionately somewhat more towards Krishna, then Radha's prominence is diminished; she takes a position inferior to that of her own girlfriend. This is a great breach of protocol, for Radharani is the greatest of all the yuthesvaris or nayikas.¹²⁰

The conclusion is that Dhanishtha and other sakhis of her category are not to be followed by one who wishes perfection on the raganuga path and attainment of spiritual handmaidenhood.

3.22 Sama-sneha

Priya-sakhis have exactly the same measure of love for Krishna as they do for their dear friend, the yuthesvari. That love is simultaneously, inexplicably great and yet always clearly expressed. Their numbers are greater than the other types of girlfriend. Rupa gives the following example of the actions of a sakhi of this type:

One day, when Srimati Radharani and Krishna were separated as a result of some misdeed of his, Syama's friend Bakulamali came and revealed her mind to Campakalata, "Dear friend, when Radha is separated from Krishna, then to see her gives me a pain in the heart. And when I see

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Krishna without Radha, I truly feel great suffering. What misery! O beautiful one, I pray therefore that I shall never take any birth in which I shall not be able to drink with my eyes the beauty of Radha and Krishna's moon-like faces, creating a joyful festival, together.”¹²¹

The parama-preshtha-sakhis like Lalita and Visakha are also sama-sneha like the priya-sakhis, with the distinction that, although they love both Radha and Krishna equally, they definitely feel themselves to be Radha's.

These eight sakhis (Lalita, Visakha, Sudevi, Rangadevi, Campakalata, Citra, Tungavidya and Indulekha) have reached such heights of love for both members of the Divine Couple that they sometimes appear to feel more affection for either the one or the other, but this distinction is slight and manifests only briefly. For example, when Radharani is in one of her sulking moods, then their sympathies might sway toward Krishna, the spurned and forlorn lover. On the other hand, when Krishna breaks his promise or fails to appear for an assignation, they will take Radha's side.

3.23 Radha-snehadhika

The prana-sakhis and nitya-sakhis are more affectionate toward Radha. Of these two groups of sakhis, the first category is more prominent.

In his Ujjvala-nilamani-kirana, Srila Visvanatha Cakravartipada states that the prana-sakhis are chief amongst the nitya-sakhis who include all those who are Radha-snehadhika.¹²²

In his commentary on Ujjvala-nilamani 8.129 already partially quoted above, Srila Visvanatha

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Cakravartipada makes the following further distinction between these two types of manjari:

Those devotees who are to be followed for the attainment of spiritual perfection should be nitya-siddha or eternally perfected souls.

Those who are labdha-siddha, having become perfected either through grace or long practice, are seen in a slightly lesser light.

This difference has existed since eternity and is here expressed in this verse by making a division between the prana-sakhis and the nitya-sakhis, the latter being followers of the former.¹²³

The example given of these sakhis is found in Ujjvala-nilamani.

One day an outspoken girlfriend of Radha's who belongs to the prana-sakhi category tried to stop Radha from going to a pre-arranged tryst with Krishna. She said to Vrinda Devi, the go-between, "Vrindel! Stop making all these clever arrangements for a liaison. Just go and tell the son of the cowherd king that it is the rainy season. There are so many poisonous snakes slithering about in the dark forests, how can he expect this timid girl, Radha, to find her way to the mountain cave? Tell him that he should take the trouble to come here in secret himself."¹²⁴

3.3 The superiority of the Radha-snehadhika sakhis

In the Ananda-candrika commentary on Ujjvala-nilamani 2.15, Srila Visvanatha Cakravartipada writes that although all sakhis find their own happiness by arranging for the pleasure of the nayika in union with her Lord, still a general division can be made of two categories from amongst

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them.

They are (1) those whose bodies are extremely attractive to Krishna due to their having salient qualities of love, beauty and coquettishness, etc., and (2) others who are somewhat inferior in these respects and so are not so attractive to the Lord's romantic aspirations.

Thus, girls of the former category may occasionally, at the behest of their friend and mistress (yuthesvari), desire for erotic dalliance with Krishna, for his pleasure. These sakhis include Lalita and the other parama-preshtha-sakhis. The second category of sakhi, however, never entertain such aspirations. They are Kasturi and the other nitya-sakhis.125

For an example, we can look to the Vrindavana-mahimamrita by Prabodhananda Sarasvati:

One day one of Srimati Radharani's handmaidens whose exclusive desire is to relish the flavour of serving her lotus feet and who never thinks for a moment, not even in dreams, that she would have any kind of intimate contact with Krishna, was accosted by him who shocked her by tearing away at her blouse and uncovering her bosom. She started crying, "No, no, what are you doing?" while Srimati Radharani, my very life and soul, stood by and watched, laughing.126

The nitya-sakhis have a certain reward for their unique spirit of abnegation, something which is withheld even from Radharani's dearest comrades like Lalita and Visakha. That reward is described for us by Raghunatha Dasa Gosvamin in Vraja-vilasa-stava:

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I take shelter of the handmaidens of the Queen of Vrindavan,
who are led by Sri Rupa Manjari
and who lovingly satisfy her
by offering hazelnuts and other condiments, massaging her
feet, bringing fragrant water and arranging trysts with her
gallant
and have thus become most dear to her. They are thus
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.127

This is the area where the manjaris are unique and distinctive.

Ranganamala and her friends, though they are themselves loving friends, either on their own initiative or at the behest of Visakha and her friends, sometimes behave towards the Ever-youthful Couple of Vraja just as if they were maidservants. Behaving shyly, they do this in order to obtain the highest ecstasy by listening to their extremely funny conversations as well as to gain their most cherished service.128

Similarly, in the Krishna-bhavanamrita, it is said, Rupa Manjari and the other handmaidens of Radharani, one sparkle of whose toenails is brighter than a flash of lightning, are certainly qualified in all respects, whether in talents or in coquettishness, to become yutesvaris or nayikas themselves, and yet they are completely devoid of any attraction for such glories. They would much rather bathe constantly in the nectarean ocean of Radha's service.129

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A further special feature of the nitya-sakhis or manjaris is that just as Srimati Radharani and the other yutesvaris are spontaneously and instinctively filled with an intense thirst to relish the flavour of Krishna's form, taste, fragrance, touch and sound, so similarly the manjaris are spontaneously and instinctively attracted to both Radha's and Krishna's qualities. To what extent and how they are so attracted can be explained as follows. The nature of madhura-rasa is clear: the gopis want to please Krishna by offering their own bodies. Even Brahma prays to be able to drink "again and again from the cup of his senses the honey-like nectar of Krishna's lotus feet."¹³⁰

According to Caitanya-caritamrita, "the nectar of Krishna's lotus feet" means his direct bodily contact.¹³¹

From this we can understand that the nayikas serve Krishna by directly relinquishing their bodies to him— that is their qualification for being in the madhura rasa. The manjaris, on the other hand, are unenthusiastic about such type of service. They never contemplate such a possibility, even in their dreams. Yet, the question may be asked, if there is no possibility of madhura rasa or romance without physical intimacy, how can the platonic spirit of the manjaris be graced with the name of samartha rati or kama-rupa bhakti?

In answer to this question, it should be said that the object of the manjaris' affection is the Holy Couple of Sri Sri Radha and Krishna together. **Therefore, the perfection of the manjaris' power of sight and the thirst of their eyes is to see that couple locked in embrace. The craving of their ears is to hear the Holy Couple's sweet murmuring conversations and that is the fulfillment of**

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their sense of hearing. The desire of their tongues is to relish the flavour of the condiments touched by the Holy Couple's lips, and in that way their sense of taste attains perfection. Similarly, the sweet fragrance that arises at the Holy Couple's union is the object craved for by their nostrils and its experience is the fulfillment of their sense of smell. The tactile sense finds plenitude in massaging the Holy Couple's feet and bodies, and this is the only object of their sense of touch.

In this way, it may be said that of the four types of sambhoga (intimate contact) mentioned by Jiva Gosvamin (i.e., by sight, conversation, touch and intimate contact) the first three are present in the manjaris to some extent. The question is, how do they experience samprayoga, or intimate contact? We get some light on this point from the following passage from the Govinda-lilamrita:

Just as the moon enlivens the lilies, so Krishna is the bright moon who enlivens the lily-like hearts of the residents of Vrindavan. His pleasure-giving potency is personified in Radha, who is like a creeper whose fruits are prema. Her girlfriends are like the unlimited branches, leaves and flowers which expand out from her self and are thus equal to her. For this reason, when that winding creeper of love is watered with the heavenly potion of Krishna's sporting activities, then the leaves and flowers (the sakhis) find hundreds of times more pleasure than if they were themselves to be sprinkled this seems quite normal.132

Just as the all-pervading, omnipotent Supreme God Almighty needs his majestic spiritual potencies to become fulfilled, similarly, the love of Radha and Krishna, though

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very elevated, self-manifest and joyful by nature, does not find fulfillment for even a moment without the presence of her girlfriends, the sakhis and manjaris. What person, genuinely learned in the science of sacred rapture, would not therefore take shelter of them?133

Prabodhananda Sarasvati also states in the Vrindavana-mahimamrita,

The pleasure felt by the eyes of the sakhi alone in seeing Radha merged in the ocean of love for Krishna makes all the Supreme Lord's festive arrangements for his own happiness seem insignificant.134

Another quote from the Govinda-lilamrita (11.137) of Krishnadasa Kaviraja illustrates the power of the vicarious pleasure of the manjaris:

If Krishna should touch Srimati Radharani, then lo and behold! her sakhis start to tremble they sweat and their body hairs stand on end and tears well in their eyes. And if Krishna should carefully sip the spirituous liquor of Radha's lips, it is they who become intoxicated! This is truly something wonderful.135

In his commentary on this verse, Srila Vishvanatha Cakravartin observes that this verse contains the rhetorical embellishment (alamkara) known as asangati or “non sequitur.”

Asangati is defined as arising when causes are described as being inflicted on one entity have their effects reproduced in a completely distinct one. Here, the Lord is touching and kissing Radha, but the effects of trembling and intoxication are described taking place in the bodies of the sakhis.136

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Another verse can be quoted here from the Ahnika-kaumudi of Kavi Karnapura where Krishna says:

O doe-eyed beauties!
When your girlfriends are absent,
you may have to look at a mirror
before you can say whether you are happy or sad. They
reflect every mood of yours they perform all the services of
a looking glass! When tears fall from your eyes they also
cry; when you are excited, their hairs stand on end; when
you laugh they also do so; and when you become
depressed, they also look down-hearted.¹³⁷

In the Krishna-bhavanamrita, there is another verse which illustrates the point:

Radha's handmaids are unable to maintain their lives if they cannot see the pastimes of the beautiful Divine Couple; with great eagerness they had gathered about the window of the forest cottage in which Radha and Krishna were locked in embrace and one of them said, "Friends, what an amazing and wonderful situation is this they have gotten themselves into."¹³⁸

If the sakhis can feel intoxicated when Krishna kisses Radharani, then it is not altogether surprising if they get an even greater pleasure by watching the intimate activities of the Lord and his mistress than they would from their own. The reason for this is that they are not lovers in the mundane sense, but are supreme, the transcendental Lord and his celestial mistress.

Krishna is romantic love personified. He has appeared in his form as the king of sacred rapture (*rasa-raja*) and thus

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he attracts all the minds of everyone in the universe, including his very self. Srimati Radharani is the supremely worshipable personification of maha-bhava, the ultimate achievement in the domain of prema. Verily she is the embodiment of prema herself, for her entire body is vibrant with pure devotional love for Krishna.

Not only are Radha and Krishna transcendental, but so also are the sakhis and manjaris. In the Krishna-bhavanamrita they are described in the following way:

These handmaidens of Radharani are unexcelled in this universe for their beauty is without bounds. The rays coming from the nails of their toes defeats the glory of the lightning bolt. Each one of them is an incarnation of Radharani's expertise in loving dalliance and thus competent to herself become a competitor for Krishna's affections. Yet such desires do not enter their minds for even a moment because they are completely desireless. In this way, they are eligible to eternally dive into the ambrosial sea of service to her.¹³⁹

Without bhava or feeling, the ecstasies of sacred rapture cannot be experienced. Without feeling, the ecstasies of love cannot be appreciated. To relish Krishna's sweetness, one must become similar to him in quality, otherwise it will not be possible. Just as Radharani's competent affection is not separable from her identity, eternal and self-manifest, so too the sakhis and manjaris have love for the Divine Couple which is similarly uncaused, self-manifest and directly produced from their own identities. This is beyond normal experience and thus inconceivable. "Those things which are inconceivable are not accessible by mental

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speculation.”¹⁴⁰

The actions of the Lord are supra-mundane, its ways and means are all transcendental; thus the unfortunate hear about them and even so develop no faith in him.

Sometimes the manjaris even faint from the ecstasies they feel when they watch the intimate pastimes of the Divine Couple through the spaces between the forest vines.

Rupa Gosvamin has described such an instance in the *Nikunja-rahasya-stava* (“Praises of the secrets of the forest-bower”)¹⁴¹:

O mind! remember Radha and Krishna, shining in the groves of Vrindavana. Their sakhis, saturated with love, fasten their eyes on them through the branches of the forest grove where they are expanding their work of love in wondrous variety; and overwhelmed with ecstasy, they fall to the ground in a swoon.¹⁴²

Sometimes Radharani makes arrangements for the manjaris to meet Krishna to be enjoyed by him; but even this intercession on her part does not shake their indifference to such direct erotic union with the Lord.

Srila Rupa Gosvamin gives an example in the *Ujjvala-nilamani*, which Srila Visvanatha Cakravartipada expands upon as follows:

One day, Srimati Radharani arranged through another of her friends for Mani Manjari to have a rendez-vous with the Lord in some forest glen. That friend, after trying persuasively to convince the reluctant manjari finally returned to Srimati’s side in failure. She then said to her, “Dear friend, you told me to try and I did. I went to Mani Manjari and tried to tempt her in many ways. I said, ‘My

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friend, I don't believe there is any thrill in this entire universe that can compare with the ecstasy of Krishna's embrace; you really should try it one time. Lalita and the other sakhis sometimes have trysts with him, why shouldn't you, just this once? They can act as both friends and, occasionally, independently as Krishna's mistresses too. There's nothing wrong with it, why don't you be like that too? Otherwise, you become too insignificant!

"Radhe, after hearing these arguments of mine, Mani answered me by saying, 'Friend, when Radharani enjoys the pleasure of Krishna's company, then I find the happiness I feel is greater than that which I could gain by doing anything for myself at all.' Therefore, dear Radhe, I am completely convinced that her heart is entirely pure because despite all temptations and clever tricks on my part, she showed not the slightest urge for going for a meeting with Krishna."143

Sometimes Krishna also personally tries to seduce the manjaris and meets with similar failure. One day one of Radharani's girlfriends was picking flowers for the purpose of making a garland. Sri Krishna chanced upon her at that time and immediately proposed to her, "O beautiful one, why not perfect your life by passing a few moments with me in this forest grove?" as well as saying many other sweet and enticing words. The bewildered girl put aside all her feminine tactics and arguments and very simply said to the Lord,

Govinda, I have only one desire:
to have the ever-greater intelligence
to be able to serve you and Radha
on the field of your ever-expanding, ecstatic romance

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so that you experience newer and newer bliss;
for by such service, unlimited gopis have attained the very
limit of the fulfillment of their desires. Therefore, oh Lord
of Gokula, my mind
never becomes eager for your direct embrace;
it does not crave for such enjoyments,
please just engage me in that service.144

Direct erotic union with the Lord is thought by many to be the ultimate object of the fulfillment of the gopis' desires but the manjaris have no attraction for it. Srila Visvanatha Cakravartipad glosses the above-quoted gopis' words: "Secretly watching your activities with Radharani in the forest groves seems to me to be hundreds of times more rapturous than direct intimate contact with you."145

When a higher happiness can be found in other ways, then what intelligent person will take up inferior ways of pleasure-seeking?

Everyone seeks happiness and naturally they most intensely crave those things which give them the most happiness. So therefore, the spontaneous craving of the manjaris is to be witness to the varieties of Radharani's loving sports with Krishna. This craving is called manjari-bhava.146

Srila Jiva Gosvamin has written a nice verse in his poetical work Madhava-mahotsava ("The spring festival"):

O sakhi! Kasturi has achieved, along with her associates, the fruit of her vow: she is completely averse to being personally embraced by Krishna himself and totally dedicated to the happiness of her friend Radha. Now today,

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here in the best of Hari's forests, she sprinkles her with water [to celebrate the occasion of her coronation as Queen of Vrindavana.]147

The manjaris are dedicated to the service of the Divine Couple, which service is their life and soul and such service performed after their union in exhausted intimacy is the highest object of their desires.

Radha Mohan Das, the grandson of Srinivasa Acarya, has written a song which is appropriate to this situation:

When the lover and beloved are exhausted after their erotic war,
they bring them condiments of betelnut; sandalwood and saffron, musk and camphor, they mix and smear upon their bodies; How incomparably beautiful the love of these priya-sakhis! Radha is worth ten million lives to them; not equalled in purity by gold smelted thousands of times, they offer her the lamps of their lives. They place enchanting garlands around their necks; they fan to give a cooling breeze; they offer water, cold and fragrant, drinking which the lovers' thirst is pacified. They massage their feet gently and rid them of their fatigue. The lovers signal them to take rest, and they all do so, feeling that their every desire has been fulfilled. Radha and Krishna close their eyes in slumber on the flower bed, the manjaris, seeing them do so, feel the happiness resulting from service executed well. Radha Mohan Das, seeing all these things is liberated from all mental pain.148

3.4 The official term for the dominant mood of the manjaris is *bhavollasa-rati*

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The definition of the word sakhi has been given separately in the Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu, Ujjvala-nilamani and Alamkara-kaustubha.

Five kinds of sakhis were listed, amongst whom the prana-sakhis and nitya-sakhis have the greatest freedom from self-consciousness when present at the loving couple's most intimate moments, being always well-fixed in the wealth of love. Their love, however, is of such a unique nature that although Sri Rupa Gosvamin had indicated in his reference to kama-rupa devotion's division called tad-bhavacchatmika, still he desired to give it another special name, that of bhavollasa rati ("love that is enlivened by their feelings," or "that love which enlivens their loving sentiment for one another." This bhavollasa rati is the sthayi bhava or dominant mood of the manjaris.

Sri Krishna is the object (vishaya) of madhura rati and Srimati Radharani is the subject (asraya). Those devotees who are endowed with a similar dominant mood of love towards the Lord are naturally friends (suhrit); the name of the friendly affection that Lalita and her other friends feel towards Srimati is therefore called suhrid-rati. If this suhrid-rati is equal to the feeling of affection that they have for Krishna, or if it is somewhat less, then it serves the function of a sancari-bhava, a helper or inspirator to the dominant mood. Thus the friendly affection that the sama-sneha and krishna-snehadhika sakhis feel for Radha is an inspirator in their love for Krishna. On the other hand, if the feeling of love for the friend, namely Radha, exceeds the devotion to even Krishna, and is always increasing due to intense absorption, then even though it remains on the one hand in the sancari category, due to its uniqueness it is given the special name of bhavollasa rati.¹⁴⁹

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These devotees of Krishna who share a common genus of love for the Lord naturally feel a mutual empathy and think of each other as friends. The best of the devotees in each of the four categories of loving relationship, such as Raktaka and Patraka amongst Krishna's servants at Nanda Grama, Subala and Sridhaman amongst the friends, Krishna's parents Nanda and Yasoda, and Srimati Radharani and Candravali amongst his mistresses, are usually loved by their friends to a degree slightly less than their level of feeling that friend has for Krishna himself. On occasion it may equal, but certainly not exceed it. In such cases, the sthayi bhava or dominating mood is the love the devotee has for Krishna, and the feeling of friendship for the more advanced or superior devotee is a subordinate feeling or sancari-bhava—a wave in the ocean of that love.

Yet we see that in the case of madhura-rasa there is a unique situation in which some of the friends of Radharani feel more affection for her than they do for even Krishna and this affection is always increasing due to the intense desire they have to please her. This feeling is a special type of sthayi-bhava known as bhavollasa rati.

Other than Srimati Radharani in the madhura-rasa, such a thing is unheard of in relation to any devotee of any other rasa. Nowhere has it been said anywhere that a devotee is hundreds of times greater than even Krishna, except in the case of Radha. Krishna says in the Caitanya-caritamrita:

“The three worlds have me alone as the source of their pleasure—who is there who will give pleasure to me? That person who is hundreds of times more qualified myself is the one who will be able to gladden my mind; yet how is it

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possible that anyone in the universe can be more qualified than I?

I can only see such virtues in Radha. The whole world becomes happy at seeing the beauty of my form, yet my eyes become fulfilled only by seeing her. The sound of my flute fills the whole world with bliss, yet my ears are stolen away by the sound of her voice. The entire universe is fragrant due to my bodily odour, yet her fragrance steals my life and soul. The world is filled with flavour due my rasa, yet the taste of her lips completely overthrows me. Even though the touch of my body is cooling to all, I myself can become cooled only by touching her. In these ways am I the source of the world's joy, yet the form and qualities of Radharani are my life and soul.150

It is for this reason that only in madhura-rasa is it possible for the manjaris to feel even more strongly about Radharani than they do about Krishna. In no other circumstance could it possible for someone to feel an affection of comparable strength for any other devotee; bhavollasa rati is only possible in the case of Srimati Radharani

Devotees relish the nectar of Krishna's sweetness according to their own particular dominant mood of love. The cause of relishing is thirst (trishna) and thus, according to the genus and degree of thirst or desire, it is possible to gauge the relative values of the tasting of sacred rapture. The manjaris are very clever; they think that their degree of desire to serve the Lord is very little and that therefore it is best not to try to enjoy Krishna directly; they choose rather to remain constantly absorbed in the mood of Srimati Radharani, the embodiment of the ocean of desire for Krishna's service, the epitome of the highest devotional

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affection of maha-bhava in its ultimate, maddening stage known as madana. They thus show more devotion to her than to him, convinced that by so doing they will be able, not just to attain a higher level of pleasure themselves, but will also be able to please him more.

Previously it was stated that madhura-rasa is only possible if the lover and beloved share a mutual desire for romantic love.

From this a question about the specific mood of the manjaris arises. One who is devoid of such erotic desire for Krishna may feel servitude, friendship or even parental affection for Radharani, but there is no possibility of madhura-rasa. The relationship between two women of the type under discussion cannot be called romantic love. The dominant affection of the manjaris is toward the Divine Couple in a romantic way; they are attached to and absorbed in them as a unit. Thus, Caitanya was indicating this spirit of the manjaris when he asked Ramananda Raya to “to hear of the loving dalliance of Radha and Krishna” after having heard from him “the truths of the love that exists between them.”¹⁵¹

Similarly, Narottama Das Thakur sings:

Remembrance is the life of the mind; what an exceedingly sweet abode!

The essence of remembrance
is the pastimes of Radha and Krishna;
this is the practice, this is the perfection
there is nothing more than this.
This is the quintessence of all the rules
and regulations of devotional life.¹⁵²

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The conclusion is that the object of the sakhis and manjaris' dominant mood of devotional love is Radha and Krishna together, and not Radha nor Krishna alone. This is demonstrated in the following poem by Krishna Dasa Kaviraja:

Without her jewels, King Bhanu's girl If put by Krishna's side,
Her eyes blossom in happiness, Love's beauty shines inside;
To see her full in joy with him Her friends all swell with pride.
Without her Lord, King Bhanu's girl Trembles in lonely
fright,
Though decked in jewels and finery She is not a happy
sight.
She wilts and so do all her friends
Like lotuses at night.¹⁵³

It is shown here that without Krishna, Radha alone is not the cause of happiness for the sakhis and manjaris. Therefore the dominant mood of affection of the manjaris has both Radha and Krishna together as its object. As Narottam Das sings,

“My destination in life or death,
the Lords of my heart are Radha and Krishna.”¹⁵⁴

The temperament of the manjaris is something new in the science of devotion. This bhavollasa rati is known therefore as a division of kamarupa bhakti, a type of erotic feeling, because they are attached to witnessing the union of the Divine Couple.

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In his commentary to Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu 2.5.128 (cited above on page 68), Jiva Gosvamin directly mentions the name of Lalita, but the dearest friends of Radha, the ashta-sakhis, who all in the sama-sneha category, at certain instances swing pendulum-like in their affections, from Radha to Krishna.

For this reason their affection cannot be called bhavollasa rati. Therefore, who exactly is being referred to by the word “etcetera” (ity adi) in the phrase “Lalita, etc.” in Jiva’s commentary?

Kasturi Manjari, Mani Manjari, etc., are nitya-sakhis. Mani Manjari is a follower of Sri Guna Manjari; therefore, there can be no doubt that Sri Rupa Manjari, Sri Rati Manjari, Sri Guna Manjari, etc., are all Radharani’s girlfriends (sakhis), even though they function as confidential hand-maidens (manjaris). Narottam Das Thakur has variously called them narma-sakhis (“pleasure-companion”), seva-para sakhi (“friends dedicated to service”), etc. 155

In the Govinda-lilamrita, Sri Rupa Manjari has been called priya-narma-sakhi (“most dear pleasure companion”, 1.86), Guna Manjari dasika (“maidservant,” 1.87) and Rati Manjari sakhi (2.52).

In Mukta-carita Ranganamala and Tulasi Manjari are called parama- pranayi-sakhis (“most loving friends”).

In Kavi Karnapura’s Alamkara-kaustubha, the priya-narma-sakhis are defined as being “those girlfriends who cause no feeling of inhibition to manifest in the leading lady, even if she is lying on her couch with her lover in an undressed state, and whom she feels to be identical with her very self.”156

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These sakhis are further described in the Ujjvala-nilamani: All those girlfriends who nurture a feeling that “we are Radha’s,” who always feel affectionate to her, even more than they do to Krishna, are called sakhi-snehadhika. Therefore, they are the girlfriends of Radharani who possess the devotional mood known by the name of bhavollasa rati.¹⁵⁷

In the Prema-bhakti-candrika, Narottama Das warns not to confuse the sama-sneha girlfriends with those who prefer Radha to Krishna. His description of the asama-sneha sakhis is as follows:

Don’t identify the sama-sneha friends of Radha with those who are asama-sneha; I will describe here those who are more affectionate to Radharani. They always remain near her talking about Krishna’s playful diversions and are thus known as her narma-sakhis.

Of them, the best is Rupa Manjari; Rati Manjari is also noteworthy, as are Lavanga Manjari and Manjulali. Kasturika Manjari and others also happily serve along with Sri Rati Manjari.

I will beg service to the Holy Couple from all of these manjaris, always be obedient to them and able to understand the purpose of their slightest motion or hint. Being absorbed in Radha and Krishna’s qualities and beauty I shall always be enthusiastically affectionate; I will make my residence amongst the sakhis.¹⁵⁸

In the Caitanya-caritamrita also, Ramananda Raya says: Whoever follows in the mood of the girlfriends of Srimati Radharani becomes eligible for attaining service to the Divine Couple in Vrindavana’s

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forest groves; other than this there is no other means to such an attainment.¹⁵⁹

3.5 Why has bhavollasa-rati earned the name of a separate sthayi-bhava rather than being known as a sancari-bhava?

In the commentary on the Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu verse that defines bhavollasa, it is said that this particular devotional mood was added by Rupa Gosvamin as an afterthought and should actually be thought of as belonging to the sancari-bhavas.

The affection of the dearest girlfriends of Srimati Radharani such as Lalita is also included in the sancaris for madhura-rati. There are thirty-three of these sancaris described in the appropriate section of the Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu; of these, all but two (augrya “nastiness” and alasya “laziness”) are considered to be suitable to the erotic mood of sacred rapture. Along with these thirty-one sancaris comes this additional feeling: “Love for friends of a similar temperament of feeling for Krishna are also known as sancaris.”¹⁶⁰

Along with friends are messengers and any other objects or persons that serve as go-betweens for the lover and beloved, including also Krishna’s male friends.

An example of Radha’s affection for a friend is given in Ujjvala-nilamani:

One day on Govardhana hill, Sri Rupa Manjari observed Radharani displaying extreme affection to Lalita during the course of her dalliances with Krishna. She said to one of Lalita’s friends in praise of her great fortune: “O friend, just see how Radharani is cleaning the perspiration and

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rearranging the hair from Lalita's face even though she is simultaneously sporting with Krishna."161

The idea is that Radha's strong show of affection to Lalita by wiping the perspiration arising in the course of their activities with the Lord does not take precedence over her feelings to Krishna, but serves to feed the fire of that love even more. Therefore, it is not a sthayi-bhava or dominant mood, but a sancari or transitory feeling.162

On the other hand, in his Tika to the above verse, Srila Visvanatha Cakravartipada cites Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu 2.5.128 and concludes that bhavollasa, the feelings that Mani Manjari and the other nitya- sakhis have for Radharani, feelings that are stronger than those they harbour for Krishna, are of a different type.

Because the predominating feelings or sthayi-bhavas have been defined as exclusively those which deal directly with Krishna, the Supreme Lord and one object of all the different types of devotion, it can hardly be called a sthayi-bhava as its predominant object is Srimati Radharani. But as these feelings are not temporary, fleeting moods, they cannot be called sancari-bhavas either.163

In view of this paradox, Rupa Gosvamin has explained Radha's feelings toward the sakhis as a new sancari-bhava and the feelings of the manjaris to Radha as a new type of sthayi-bhava as a subdivision of madhura-rati.

Sri Sri Radha and Krishna,
In either birth or death, my only goal Lord and lady of my life and soul.

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Here the word prana-pati (“lord of my life”) is generally used to refer to one’s lover, but in the above line by Narottam Das, it is referring to the conjugal unit of both Radha and Krishna. It is definitely something novel and has no precedent in Vaishnava theology.

Such an attitude cannot function other than towards Radha. **The greatest of the tasters of sacred rapture, Srila Rupa Gosvamin has thus made another lasting contribution to the science of sacred rapture by coining the term bhavollasa.**

3.6 The competence of manjari-bhava in conquering Krishna

Love when greater for Radharani than for even Krishna is more competent in conquering the Lord’s own affections. For example, in the Ujjvala-nilamani, it is said that one day Mani Manjari advised a new girlfriend:

Listen: if you're clever, I'll tell you a secret
that all of us have discovered: Make friends with Radharani.
[If you think, “Why should I waste my time
abandoning efforts to conquer Krishna
to win her over?” then listen]:
If you just make friendship with Radha,
then the joyous wealth of love for Krishna
will come automatically and offer itself to you.¹⁶⁴

Srila Jiva Gosvamin comments that the wealth of happiness that exists in loving Krishna is existentially an integral part of friendship with Radha.¹⁶⁵

Srila Visvanatha Cakravartipada also paraphrases Mani Manjari’s instruction to the new arrival:

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When you become Radharani's confidential friend then he will know you as his beloved's sakhi and will show spontaneous affection for you, even more so than if you became his mistress independently. So by becoming friends with Radha, intimacy with Krishna will follow automatically. If you become Radha's friend, then in certain situations when she is angry with him or when it is hard for him to meet her because her mother-in-law or others keep her entangled in household affairs or locked in her room, then he will have to come to you for help. Without your having to do anything, he will come to you to make friends. There will be no need for you to make any independent effort to gain his affectionate attention.”¹⁶⁶

For this reason, the manjaris pray to Radharani as follows:
O Queen of Vrindavana! I pray always
for your mercy, again and again.
By your mercy, even the killer of Kesin
will come and appeal to me in flattering words
to get help from me to meet you.¹⁶⁷

3.7 The manjaris' way of devotion

The manjaris pray to Radha:

O goddess of the month of Karttika,
I beg you with sweet words to give me
the best of benedictions:
by which Krishna, the killer of Baka,
knowing me to be yours,
will become more merciful to me.¹⁶⁸

And their prayer to Krishna:

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O son of Maharaja Nanda! I fall at your feet and beg
with thousands of tearful prayers
that I may become the object of Radha's mercy,
for she is the crown diamond of all the beauties of Vraja.
Please fulfill this desire.¹⁶⁹

The sentiment can thus be summarized:
“My mistress is the queen of Vrindavana; I worship the
lifter of Govardhana knowing that he is her lover.”
Raghunatha Dasa Gosvamin expresses the same idea in the
“Teachings to the Mind” where he states:

O dear mind! Remember always
that the moon of the forests of Vraja
is my mistress Srimati Radharani's lover,
and that she is the one who rules him.
Think of Lalita as her unequalled and chief sakhi,
of Visakha as the spiritual master who delivers
the different intimate teachings of loving service;
and remember that the king of mountains and the dear
pond
are the givers of attachment, eagerness and devotion
whereby Radha and Krishna's direct presence can be
perceived.¹⁷⁰

3.8 Bhavollasa rati is the gift of Caitanya Mahaprabhu's special mercy

Caitanya Mahaprabhu is the combined form of the king of all transcendental tastes and the embodiment of maha-bhava. After fulfilling his three special desires he also relishes this mood of the manjaris. This bhavollasa rati is the gift that was never before bestowed on the world and the special mercy of his incarnation.

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Krishna, known as the foremost amongst the relishers of sacred rapture, accepted the mood and lustre of his chief consort Srimati Radharani with a view to fulfilling three desires (viz., to know what is the nature of Radha's love, what is the extent of his own sweetness, and what is the nature of the happiness that she experiences in her love for him).

After he, in his form as Gaurasundara, had experienced the fulfillment of those desires through various pastimes, a new desire manifested within him: due to being filled with sweet and beneficent love, he wished to experience the sentiment of the friends of Srimati Radharani in their intimate service of the Divine Loving Couple and after relishing it himself, to distribute it to the people of the world. This is the devotion that is glorified in the beginning of the Caitanya-caritamrita as anarpita-carim cirat... unnatojjvala-rasam sva-bhakti-sriyam, "the most elevated and effulgent, flavorful, intimate devotional beauty that had not been offered to the world for an inestimable length of time."171

From Krishnadasa Kaviraja's account in the Caitanya-caritamrita, we can get a little idea of how this unique pastime of the Lord was experienced by him in this special manifestation as the combination of rasa-raja and maha-bhava.

Those ecstatic transformations that had never before been seen anywhere were all manifest in the Lord's body. Sometimes the joints of his arms and legs would separate to a distance of 8 or 10 inches with only the tightened skin holding the limbs together. Then again, sometimes his head and limbs would contract and withdraw into his body in the manner of a tortoise.172

The gopis constantly relish the nectar of Krishna's qualities,

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his form, taste, fragrance, sound and touch; my mind is a mendicant who comes to them with his five ragged disciples, the senses, to beg from them the remnants of their feast by which he will maintain his life.¹⁷³ In his half-conscious state, Mahaprabhu babbled the following:

I saw the Yamuna and was immediately transported to Vrindavana where I saw the son of the king of Vraja playing water sports with Radhika and the other gopis. They were frolicking with great amusement in the waters of the Yamuna. I stood on the shore with the other gopis watching; one sakhi particularly showed me everything, pointing out the special features of the sports. O sakhi! See the water games being enjoyed by Krishna! He is like a maddened elephant agitating the waters of a pond in the association of all his gopi she-elephants. Seeing all these amusements of Krishna and the gopis, my mind is overjoyed and my eyes and ears have attained supreme satisfaction.¹⁷⁴

Tasting this rasa himself, he taught it to all the devotees; the Lord was rich with the jewels of prema. He discriminated not as to the place or recipient; he was the greatest of all philanthropists. Not even a drop of this ocean of secret spiritual emotions is attained by Brahma and the other demigods, yet this wealth was distributed by the Lord throughout the world. No one can describe successfully the glories of such an incarnation, so merciful and so charitable, the equal of whom has never been seen. All these things should not be revealed openly, yet if they are not explained no one will ever understand, yet only those who become subservient to the servant of the servant of the Lord and who thus receive his mercy will be able to

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comprehend these wondrous pastimes of his.¹⁷⁵

These pastimes of the Lord are transcendental as are their intricacies and details; the unfortunate develop no faith in them, even after hearing.¹⁷⁶

Therefore the Lord himself accepted the sentiments of a gopi and called out to Krishna as “the Lord of my heart.” He is Krishna and yet he is a gopi what a contradiction! How incomprehensible the character of the Supreme Lord! Don’t doubt it by raising many objections. All things are possible by his inconceivable potencies. The Lord’s amusements are inconceivable to the mundane mind, how amusing they are! How wonderful his emotional transformations, how wonderful his qualities, how wonderful his behaviour with his devotees.¹⁷⁷

In the Caitanya-candramrita also, Srila Prabodhananda Sarasvati also states that,

As much as an aspirant devotee develops devotion for the Lord Gauranga by the grace of those intimate with him, that is the extent to which the ocean of nectar of love for the service of Srimati Radharani manifests suddenly in his heart.¹⁷⁸

The purport is that as much as a devotee experiences Mahaprabhu directly through devotion, that is the extent to which he will realize the nature and extent of Radharani’s maha-bhava and its different external manifestations. The glory of Radha’s love for Krishna will be comprehended by the aspirant devotees through Mahaprabhu to the fullest extent and as a result he will know love for her as her hand-maid. Therefore Vasu Ghosha sings in a famous song: Had Gaura not appeared, then what would have happened?

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How would I have maintained
my life? Who would have revealed the glories of
Radharani's love for Krishna to the world?

Who would have known the secret of entering into the
sweetest chambers of the Lord's abode in the mellow realm
of Vrindavana? Who would have had the strength to
worship the Lord in the mood of the damsels of Vraja?

Free your mind from the complication of doubt and simply
glorify the great qualities of Lord Gauranga! I cannot see
any person in this entire universe who is as merciful as he.

How is it that even after crying out the name of Gauranga
my heart does not melt? How is it that I am still alive? Vasu
Ghosha says that it seems that the creator has made him
with a heart made out of stone.179

- Translation by Jagadananda das

Footnotes:

114 visrambho gadha-visvasa-viseshah | BRS 3.3.106. Jiva's
gloss: gadha-visvasa-visesho'tra parasparam sarvatha
svabheda-pratitih |

115 nirupadhi-priti-para sadrisi sukha-duhkhayoh |
vayasya-bhavad anyo'nyam hridaya-jna sakhi bhavet || AK
5.279

116 svatmano'py adhikam prema kurvananyo'nyam
acchalam |
visrambhinī vayo-veshadibhis tulya sakhi mata ||
UN 7.70. (Kavya-mala edn., 7.66, p. 178).

117 prema-lila-viharanam samyag vistarika sakhi |
visrambha-ratna-peti ca tatah sushthu vivicyate || UN 8.1.

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118 padabjayos tava vina vara-dasyam eva nanyat kadapi
samaye kila devi yace | sakhyaya te mama namo'stu
namo'stu nityam

dasyaya te mama raso'stu raso'stu satyam || Vilapa-
kusumanjali, 16.

119 asya vrindavanesvaryah sakhyah panca-vidha matah |
sakhyas ca nitya-sakhyas ca prana-sakhyas ca kascana |
priya-sakhyas ca parama-preshta-sakhyas ca visrutah ||
UN 4.50

120 raganugiya-bhakta-mate sri-krishnad anyuna-
pritimattayaivanujigamishita gopi khalv anugamaye |
tasman nyuna-prityapy anugamane vacye vaidhad ragasya
ko viseshah ? bhaktanugatim vina vaidha-bhakter apy
asiddheh | tasmac chri-krishne'dhika sakhi tad-
anujigamishubhir janaih sri-krishnad anyuna-priti-vishayi-
kartavya | sri-radhibadya sarva-yuthesvari tu sri-krishnad
ishan-nyuna-priti-vishayi-karyeti sakhyah sakasad api
yuthesvarya apakarshe dyotite mahan evanaya iti | atah
sakhyo nanugamyanta iti ta eka-vidha eveti sarvam
avadatam. Ananda-candrika to UN 8.137 (Kavya-mala edn.,
238)

121 vina krishnam radha vyathayati samantan mama mano
vina radham krishno'py ahaha sakhi mam viklavayati |
janih sa me ma bhut kshanam api na yatra kshanaduhau
yugenakshnor lihyam yugapad anayor vaktra-sasinau || UN
8.128

122 ya radhikayam snehadhika sa nitya-sakhi, tatra mukhya
ya sa prana-sakhy ukta.

123 gopi-padavi-prapti raganugam bhaktim vina na
bhavatiti purva-pratipaditvat siddhantad anugyam ca vina
raganugaya asiddhe raganugamanenaiva ragavatinam tasam
apy anugatir vyakhyateti anugamya nitya-siddha

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gopya ivanugantryo'pi labdha-siddhayo'nadita
evanugamyabhyah kincin nyunataya vartanta eva
124 viramatu tava vrinde dutya-caturya-carya
sahacari vinivritya bruhi goshthendra-sunum |
vishama-vishadhareyam sarvari pravrishenya
katham iha giri-kunje bhirur esha praheya || UN 8.13

125 atra sakhi-bhavam samasrita iti | yadyapi sakhyo hi sva-
sva-yuthesvarinam sri-radhadinam eva sri- krishnanga-
sanga-sukhena sukhinyo na tu svesham, tadapi tah
samanyato dvidha bhavanti: prema-saundarya-
vaidagdhyadinam adhikyena sri-krishnasyatilobhaniya-
gatryas tesham nyunatvena tasyatilobhaniya-gatryas ca |
tatra purvah sri-krishna-sukhanurodhat tata eva sva-
yuthesvarinam apy agrahadhyikyac ca kadacit krishnanga-
sanga-sprihavatyo'pi bhavanti | tas ca lalitadyah parama-
preshtha-sakhyadaya uttaras tu tad-dvayabhavat kadapi
krishnanga-sanga-sprihavatyo na bhavanti | tas ca kastury-
adayo nitya-sakhyah | Ananda-candrika to UN 2.15
(Kavya-mala edn., 46)

126 ananya-sri-radha-pada-kamala-dasyaika-rasa-dhi
hareh sange rangam svapana-samaye napi dadhati |
balat krishne kurpasaka-bhidi kimapy acarati kapy
udasrur meveti pralapati mamatma ca hasati || VMA 16.94

127 tambularpana-pada-mardana-payo-danadibhisaradibhir
vrindaranya-mahesvarim priyataya yas toshayanti priyah |
prana-preshtha-sakhi-kulad api kilasankocita bhumikah
keli-bhumishu rupa-manjari-mukhas ta dasikah samsraye ||
Verse 38

128 vraja-navina-yuva-dvandva-ratnam prati Visakhadi-
dvara kvacit svayam va lajjam abhiniya mrudu bhashita-
vivicyamana-narma-kala-kalapa-janita-paramananda-
visesha-labhaya abhilashita-paricarana-visesha-lobhaya ca

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ranganamala-prabhritaya etah parama-pranayi-sakhyo'pi
paricarika iva vyavaharanti | Mukta-carita, p.111

129 ta vidyud-dyuti-jayi-prapadaika-rekha
vaidagdhyā eva kila murti-bhritis tathapi |
yuthesvaritvam api samyag arocayitva
dasyamritabdhim anu sasnur ajasram asyah || KBhA 3.2

130 etad hrishika-cashakair asakrit pibamah
sarvadayo'nghry-udaja-madhv-amritasavam || BhP
10.14.33

131 anghri-padma-sudha kahe krishna-sangananda |
Cf. Commentary on Brihad-Bhagavatamrita 1.7.99

132 sakhyah sri-radhikaya vraja-kumuda-vidhor hladini-
nama-sakteh saramsa-prema-vallyah kisalaya-dala-pushpadidi-
tulyah sva-tulyah | siktayam krishna-lilamrita-rasa-nicayair
ullasantyam amushyam jatollasah sva-sekac chata-gunam
adhibhakti santi yat tan na citram || GLA 10.16, quoted in
Caitanya-caritamrita, 2.8.211.

133 vibhur api sukha-rupah sva-prakaso'pi bhavah
kshanam api nahi radha-krishnayor ya rite svah |
pravahati rasa-pushtim cid-vibhutir ivesah
sayati na padam asam kah sakhinam rasajnah || GLA
10.17

134 radha-nagara-keli-sagara-nimagnali-drisam yat sukham
no tal-leśa-lavayate bhagavataḥ sarvo'pi saukhyotsavah || |
VMA 1.54

135 sprisati yadi mukundo radhikam tat-sakhinam
bhavati vapushi kampa-sveda-romanca-bashpam |
adhara-madhu mudasyas cet pibaty esha yatnad
bhavati bata tad asam attata citram etat || GLA 11.137
136 atyanta-bhinnadharatve yugapad-bhashanam yadi |
dharmayor hetu-phalyos tada sa syad asangatih ||
radhanga-sparsa-tad-adhara-madhu-pana-rupa-hetuh tat-

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sakhinam anga-rupa-bhinnadhare hetu-janyam phalam
yayos taylor dharmayo radha-sparsadhara-pana-kampadi-
mattata-rupayor yugapad-bhashanam atrasangatih

137 pataty asre sasra bhavati pulake jata-pulakah smite
bhati smera malimani jate sumalinah | anasadya svalir
mukuram abhivikshya sva-vadanam
sukham va duhkham va kimapi kathaniyam mrigadrisah | |
AK 5.128

138 yas tv etayoh keli-vilokanam vina
naiva svasanty asu gavaksha-sancayam |
sritasu kacin nijagada pasyata-
nayor dasa keyam abhud ihadbhuta | | KBhA 20.26

139 ta vidyd-dyuti-jayi-prapadaika-rekha vaidagdhyeva
kila murti-bhutas tathapi | yuthesvaritvam api samyag
arocayitva dasyamritabdhim anusasnur ajasram asyah | |
KBhA 2.1

140 acintyah khalu ye bhava na tams tarkena yojayet | MBh
cited at BRS 2.5.93

141 Some question about Rupa Gosvamin's authorship of
this work has been raised. No authoritative listing of Rupa's
writings such as those found in Caitanya-caritamrita or
Bhaktiratnakara include it. Stylistically it also
shows characteristics unfamiliar to Rupa, leading some to
feel that the poem is perhaps the work of Prabodhananda
Sarasvati.

142 pranayamaya-vayasyah kunja-randhrarpitakshih
kshiti-talam anu labdhvananda-murccham patantih |
prati rati-vidadhanau ceshtitais citra-citraih
smara nibhrita-nikunje radhika-krishna-candrau | | Verse
24.

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143 tvaya yad upabhujyate murajid-anga-sange sukham tad
eva bahu janati svayam avaptitah suddha-dhih | maya krita-
vilibhanapty adhika-caturi-caryaya

kadapi mani-manjari na kurute'bhisara-spriham || UN 8.89

144 Radha-ranga-lasat-tvad-ujjvala-kala-sancarana-prakriya-
caturyottaram eva sevanam aham govinda samprarthaye |
yenasesha-vadhu-janodbhata-mano-rajya-prapanca-vadhau
notsukyam bhavad-anga-sangama-rase'py alambate man-
manah || UN 8.88

145 tvaya saha svanga-sanga-sukhad api jala-randhradau sri-
radhanga-sanga-darsanottham sukham adhikam
anubhutam man-manasa

146 The direct act of love-making functions as a climax to the variegated sportings of the transcendental loving pair and is not prominent as their highest source of happiness. As Rupa Gosvamin describes it at the very end of Ujjvala-nilamani (15.253): “Those who are knowledgeable about sacred rapture have experienced that the actual sexual act is not as great a cause of happiness for experienced lovers as their various flirtations and loving exchanges.”

(vidagdhanam mitho lila-vilasena yatha sukham | na tatha
samprayogena syad evam rasika viduh ||) Furthermore, the sexual act of the Supreme Lord has no tinge of mundane-ness to it whatsoever. One should bear these points in mind at all times while going through this or any other book on the supramundane love life of the Lord

147 Baka-ripu-parirambhasvada-vancha-viraktim
vratam iva sakhi kartri svali-saukhyaika-trishna |
phalam alabhata kastury-adir alih sakhinam
hari-vana-vara-rajye sincate tam yad adya || MadhM 7.131

148 rati-rane srama-yuta, nagari-nagara, mukha-bhari
tambula yogay |

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malayaja kunkuma, mrigamada karpura, militahi gata lagay
||
aparupa priya-sakhi prem |
nija-pran koti, dei niramanchan, naha tula lakh-ban hem ||
manorama malya, duhun gale arpan, bijan sita mridu bat |
sugandhi sitala, karu jala arpana, jaiche hota duhun sat ||
duhunka carana puna, mridu sambahana, kari srama
karalahi dur |
ingite sayana, karala duhun sakhigana, sabahu manorathapur ||
kusuma seje duhun, nidrita heran, sevana parayana sukh |
radha-mohana das, kiye heraba, metaba sab manodukh ||

149 sancari syat samano va krishna-ratyah suhrid-ratih |
adhika pushyamana ced bhavollasa ratih || BRS 2.5.128

150 ama haite anandita hay tribhuvan | amake ananda dibe
aiche kon jan ||
ama haite yara hay sata sata gun | sei jan ahladite pare mora
man ||
ama haite guni bada jagate asambhav | ekali radhate taha
kari anubhav mora rupe apyayita kare tribhuvan | radhara
vacane hare amara sravan yadyapi amara gandhe jagat
sugandha |
mora citta ghrana habe radha anga-gandha ||
yadyapi amare rase jagat suras | radhara adhara rase ama
kare vas || yadyapi amara sparsa kotindu sital | radhikara
sparse ama kare susital || ei mata jagatera sukhe ami hetu |
radhikara rupa guna amara jivatu || CC 1.4.239-248

151 prabhu kahe—janilun krishna-radha prema-tattva |
sunitे cahiye donhar vilasa-mahattva || CC 2.8.186
152 maner smarana pran, madhura madhura dham, yugala-
vilasa smriti-sar |

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sadhy-a-sadhana ei, iha par ara nei, ei tattva sarva-vidhi-sar
|| PBC

153 vinapy akalpah sri-vrisharavi-suta krishna-savidhe
mudotpulla bhavabharana-valitalih sukhayati |
vina krishnam trishnakulita-hridayalankriti-cayair
yutapy esha mlana malinayati tasam tanu-manah || GLA
11.134

154 jivane marane gati, radha-krishna prana-pati | Prema-
bhakti-candrika

155 In Sanskrit dramatic literature, the hero would normally have a companion known as the narma-saciva or narma-suhrit who acted as a kind of minister to his diversions. in Ujjvala-nilamani (2.13), the term priya-narma-sakha is used to describe Subala, Arjuna and other of Krishna's friends. The definition given there is as follows: "The priya-narma-sakha is the best of all of Krishna's companions for he is knowledgeable about the most intimate of his activities (atyantika-rahasya-jnah) and is possessed of the attitude of a girlfriend (sakhi- bhavam asritah). See also Kalidasa's Malavikagnimitra (2.7 and 1.11) and Sisupalavadha (1.59), etc

156 na samkocam yaya yati kantena sayatotthita |
atmano murtir anyaiva priyanarma-sakhi tu sa || Alamkara-
kaustubha 5

157 tadiyatabhimaninyo yah sneham sarvadasritah |
sakhyam alpadhikam Krishnat sakhi-snehadhikas tu tah ||
UN 8.131

158 sama-sneha asama-sneha, na kariha dui leha, ebe kahi
adhika sneha-gan |
nirantara thake sange, krishna-katha lila-range, narma-sakhi
ei sab jan || sri-rupa-manjari sar, sri-rasa-manjari ar,
lavanga-manjari manjulali | sri-rati-manjari sange, kasturika

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adi range, prema-seva kare kutujali || e sabar anuga haiya,
prema-seva niba caiya, ingite bujhibo sab kaje || rupe gun
daga-magi, sada habo anuragi, basati karibo sakhi-majhe ||

159 ei sakhi bhave jei kare anugati || radha-krishna kunja-
seva sadhya sei pay ||
sei sadhya paite nahika upaya || CC 2.8.204-5
160 sakhyadishu nija-premapy atra sancaritam vrajet || UN
13.2
161 saila-murdhni harina viharanti roma-kudmala-
karmabita-murtih ||
radhika salalitam lalitayah pasya marshti lulitalakam asyam
|| UN 13.104
162 lalitaya asyam marshti viharajam prasvedam apanayatiti
lalita-vishaya sri-radha-ratir apy atra samcari-bhavo bhavan
sri-krishna-ratim pushnati || Srila Visvanatha
Cakravartipada's commentary to the above-quoted verse.
Kavya-mala ed'n, to UN 15.101, p.385

163 yadi kvacit krishnarateh sakasad apy adhika syat taya
pushyamana ca syat tada bhavollasa itiryate na tasyah
sancaritvam napi tasyah sthayitvam iti bhavah || Ibid.

164 vayam idam anubhya sikshayama kuru cature saha
radhayaiva sakhyam || priya-sahacari yatra badham antar-
bhavati hari-pranaya-pramoda-lakshmih || UN 8.133
165 yatra sri-radha-sakhye sri-hari-pranayananda-sampattir
antar-bhavam prapnoti || Locana-rocani to UN 11.133
(Kavya-mala, 11.125, p.236)
166 tava sri-radha-sakhitve tu siddhe mat-preyasyah
sakhiyam iti tvayi sri-krishnasya snehadhikayam
avasyam bhavi || sri-radhyah kadacin mana-guruni
radhadav atidurlabhye tat-praptyartham tvam apy
apekshishyamanena tena prathamata eva tvaya saha

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sakhyam avasyam kartavyam iti tena saha tava sakhyam
ayatna-siddham iti | | Ananda-candrika to ibid

167 karunam muhur arthaye param tava vrindavana-
cakravartini |
api kesi-ripor maya bhavet sa catu-prarthana-bhajanam
janah | | Rupa Gosvamin, Stava-mala: Catu-pushpanjali, 23.

168 bhavatim abhivadya catubhir varam urjesvari varyam
arthaye |
bhavadiyataya kripam yatha mayi kuryad adhikam
bakantakah | | UV, 20
169 pranipatya bhvantam arthaye pasu-palendra-kumara
kakubhih |
vraja-yauvati-mauli-malika karuna-patram imam janam kuru
| | ibid, 19
170 mad-isa-nathatve vraja-vipina-candram vraja-vane-
svarim tan-nathatve tad-atula-sakhitve tu lalitam |
visakham sokshali-vitarana-gurutve priya-saro-
girindrau tat-preksha-lalita-rati-datve smara manah | |
Manah-siksha 9

171 Caitanya-caritamrita 1.1.4 (Vidagdha-madhava 1.2)
172 kahan nahi suni je je bhaver vikar | sei bhava hay
prabhura sarire pracar | hasta-pader sandhi sab vitasti
pramane |
sandhi charii bhinna haye carma rahe sthane | |
hasta pada sira sab sarire bhitare |
pravishta hay kurma-rupa dekhiye prabhure | | CC 2.2.11-
13
173 krishna guna-rupa-rasa, gandha-sabda-parasa, se sudha
asvade gopi-gan | ta-sabara grasa-seshe, ani pancendriya
sishye, se bhikshay rakhaye jivan | | CC 3.14.49

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174 sakhi he! dekha krishnera jala-keli-range | krishna-matta kari-var, cancala kara pushkar, gopi-gan karinira sange || jaha kari asvadan, anandita mora man, netra karna jugma juriaaila || CC 3.18.80-82; 84

175 apane kari asvadane, sikhaiila bhakta-gane, prema-cintamanira prabhu dhani | nahi jane sthanasthan, jare tare kare dan, mahaprabhu data siromani | ei gupta-bhava-sindhu, brahma na pay eka bindu, hena dhan bilaila samsare | aiche dayalu avatar, aiche data nahi ar, guna keho nare varnibare || kahibara katha nahe, kahile keha na bujhaye, aiche citra caitanyera ranga | sei se bujhite pare caitanyera kripa jare, hay tara dasanudasa sanga || CC 2.2.81-83

176 alaukika lila prabhura alaukika ritি | sunileha bhagya-hinera na hay pratiti || CC 1.17

177 ataeva apane prabhu gopi bhava dhari | vrajendra-nandane kahe prananatha kari || sei krishna sei gopi parama virodh | acintya-caritra prabhur ati sudurbodh || ithe tarka kari keho na kara samsay | krishner acintya-sakti ei mata hay || acintya adbhut krishna-caitanya vihar | citra-bhava citra-guna citra-vyavahar || CC 1.17.303-6

178 yatha yatha gaura-padaravinde vindeta bhaktim krita-punya-rasih |
tathotsarpati hridy akasmad radha-padambhoja-sudhambu-rasih ||

Caitanya-candramrita 78

179 jadi gauranga na hata, ki mene hanta, kemane dharitam de |

radhara mahima, rasa-sindhu-sima, jagate janato ke madhura vrinda-vipina madhuri pravesa caturi sar | varaja-juvati bhavera bhakati sakati haita kar ||
gao gan puna gaurangera guna sarala hanya man |
e tin bhuvane dayara thakura na dekhiye eka-jan ||

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gauranga baliya na gela galiya kemane dharila de |
vasur hiya pashana diya kemane gariila ke

Translation by Jagadananda das

11. Know Thy Self – or what actually happens at the time of initiation

“Know Thy Self” – this question has haunted the minds of many great thinkers and philosophers. Socrates immediately comes to my humble mind, but of course this utmost essential question should be at the heart of all philosophy. “Who am I”? “Where do I come from?” “Where do I go from here?” “What is my duty (what are my duties?)”

Srila Sanatana Goswami asked this question for the benefit of all souls and afterwards, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu instructs him on this very important topic.

**‘ke āmi’, ‘kene āmāya jāre tāpa-traya’
ihā nāhi jāni — ‘kemane hita haya’ (CC Madhya 20.102)**

“Who am I? Why do the threefold miseries always give me trouble? If I do not know this, how can I be benefited?

Everybody should understand who we really are. We all have forgotten our relationship with God. That is our greatest mistake. It is our duty to realize our true selves. To do this, we need to know about our relationship which we have with Krishna. It is all about relationship. A son is related to his father, a mother is related to her daughter.

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Without relationship there can be no love. When we know our relationship with Krishna, we can truly start to love Him. This is “sambandha-tattva”. We are here in this world to practice this through LOVE IN ACTION. All our relationships here in this world help us to be fixed in our eternal relationship with Sri Sri Radha Krishna. We can start with loving relationships right here in this world, in our daily life, because Krishna dwells in every living entity. So Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu told Srila Sanatana Goswami who we really are:

jīvera ‘svarūpa’ haya — krsnera ‘nitya-dāsa’
krsnera ‘tatasthā-śakti’ ‘bhedābheda-prakāśa’
sūryamśa-kirana, yaiche agni-jvālā-caya
svābhāvika krsnera tina-prakāra ‘śakti’ haya (CC
Madhya 20.108-109)

“It is the living entity’s constitutional position to be an eternal loving servant of Krishna because he is the marginal energy of Krishna and a manifestation simultaneously one with and different from the Lord, like a molecular particle of sunshine or fire. Krishna has three varieties of energy.”

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Unfortunately, the living entity has forgotten his relationship with Krishna:

**kṛṣṇa bhuli' sei jīva anādi-bahirmukha
ataeva māyā tāre deya samsāra-duhkha**

“Forgetting Krishna, the living entity has been attracted by the external feature from time immemorial. Therefore the illusory energy gives him all kinds of misery in his material existence.” (CC Madhya 20.117)

We are like a fish out of the water.

Truly, in intimate moments, we feel that we don't belong here. We don't want to die. We don't want to suffer. We all want to be happy. As parts and parcels of the Supreme Happy Person, we too have the capacity to BE REALLY happy. Sri Krishna is so merciful. He can arrange everything for us so that we can BE with Him for all eternity. How does He arrange it? By letting us become “transformed” by a combination of His innermost energies. This combination of His inner energies is widely known as BHAKTI (devotion, LOVE-IN-ACTION). When His bliss-energy and His knowledge energy combine, they form the BHAKTI-ENERGY.

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This marvellous energy is not from our mortal realm. It descends to our realm like Mother Ganges descends from the spiritual realm to our earth.

By the causeless mercy of Sri Krishna, He lets us come in contact with this wonderful energy.

When we desire to dedicate our lives to the goal of becoming lovers of God (Krishna), all will be most wonderfully arranged.

We will meet saintly people who can answer us all our questions. We will become inspired to practice what many perfected souls have practiced. We follow their holy foot steps.

As followers of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, we can receive something very extraordinary and something which was never given before.

It is wonderful to love Sri Krishna, but it is most wonderful to love THE ONE WHO loves Krishna the most.

We can become Radhika´s shadows. We can be with Her for all eternity. This is the highest goal of our human existence: Radha-dasyam. Krishna will be so much happy if we decide to follow exactly THIS path.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu descended in the mood of Radhika to teach how to follow this most splendid path. It is called RAGANUGA-BHAKTI.

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If we hear about the pastimes of Sri Sri Radha and Krishna, we will develop the desire, to also take part in these pastimes, to also BE WITH THEM.

In RAGANUGA-BHAKTI, we chose a role-model of the perfect associates of The Divine Couple (the ragatmika-devotees) and we follow them in mood and behaviour.

Unfortunately, we can't enter the eternal pastimes with our mortal body.

We need a special body to BE WITH THEM.

For THEM, nothing is impossible. So it is not astonishing that They will mercifully “grant” us such a wonderful and everlasting body.

When we start engaging in raganuga-bhakti, we will at one point meet our Sri Gurudeva. Without the mercy of a true Gurudeva, NOTHING is possible.

**yasya prasadad bhagavat-prasado
yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto 'pi
dhyayan stuvams tasya yashas trisandhyam
vande guroh sri-charanaravindam**

By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Krsna. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement. Therefore, I should always remember and praise the

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spiritual master. At least three times a day I should offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master.

When our Sri Gurudeva sees us fit and worthy, he will bestow upon us the “seed of bhakti”.

**brahmaṇda bhramite kona bhagyavan jiva
guru kṛṣṇa prasade paya bhakti-lata-bija
By the causeless mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa, the
devotional practitioner can receive the seed of bhakti.**

Sri Gurudeva, who carries bhakti in his heart because he received it from his own Gurudeva (parampara), can impart the seed of bhakti in our heart.

It all depends on the purity of our heart. The most important ingredient of such purity is humility. Our heart is like a container for bhakti. The more holes a container has, the more it is useless to carry anything in it.

So, we humbly approach Sri Gurudeva to bestow upon us the most merciful gift of initiation.

We beg him for giving us “DIKSHA”.
Krishna recommends this in His Gita:

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tad viddhi pranipatena
pariprasnena sevaya
upadeksyanti te jnanam
jnaninas tattva-darsinah

Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.

What is meant with diksha, or initiation?

In his Bhakti Sandarbha (283) Srimat Jiva Gosvamipada quotes the sastras to describe the glories of initiation —

divyam jnanam yato dadyat kuryat papasya
sankshayam tasmad diksheti sa prokta desikais tattva
kovidaih

“That which bestows divine knowledge and destroys all sins is called diksha by the acaryas who know the truth.”

Sri Jivapada adds: divyam jnanam hyatra srimati
mantre bhagavat svarupa jnanam tena bhagavata
sambandha visesha jnanam ca —

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“Here divine knowledge means the knowledge about the Lord’s intrinsic identity which lies within the mantra, along with specific knowledge of the living being’s relationship with the Lord.”

So most merciful Sri Gurudeva bestows upon us diksha-mantras. Srila Jiva Goswamipad explains to us here why we would need such mantras. These mantras are like touchstones. They contain two VERY important ingredients: Information of Krishna’s intrinsic identity AND ALSO information of our identity in a SPECIFIC relationship with Krishna. This is called divya-jnana: To KNOW OUR SELVES in relationship to the Divine Couple.

By chanting these diksha-mantras and by meditating on them, all perfection will come to us.

Some people claim that all this knowledge is not “imparted” or “bestowed”, but only “re-awakened” or “recovered” since we are actually full of knowledge and we just forgot it.

This is not true and, like proven above, not mentioned in any shastra. Krishna specifically uses the verb “IMPART” and Jiva Goswamipad uses “BESTOW”...

The jivas are NOT full of knowledge, only Krishna is.

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Knowledge in the category of the jiva means
“AWARENESS”.

At this very significant moment of holy initiation,
something extremely wonderful happens.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu himself confirms this in the
Caitanya-caritamrita:

**diksa-kale bhakta kare atma-samarpana
sei-kale krsna tare kare atma-sama**

**At the time of initiation, when the devotee offers
himself up to the Lord, then the Lord makes him
equal to himself. He bestows to the devotee a body
which is spiritual like his own so that the devotee can
engage in the service of his lotus feet.**

Now this verse has very very deep meanings. Clearly there are happening things on two “levels”: EXTERNALLY and INTERNALLY. Externally, the spiritualization of the devotee’s material body takes place miraculously.

My Param-Gurudeva, Sri Kunja Bihari das Babaji writes:
The transformation of the devotee’s body is a gradual process. In his commentary on the words “they gave up their bodies of material elements” in Bhagavata-purana (10.29.10), Visvanatha presents the following argument:

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Other than a devotee surrendered to the Lord, no one, not the jnanin, nor the yogin, nor any other transcendentalist is actually completely free from the material qualities. This was stated by the Lord to Uddhava (BhP 11.25.26). One should understand this in the following way: the devotee's body is considered to be nirguna because, on the order of his spiritual master, all of his senses are engaged in the transcendental service of the Lord his ears in hearing about Krishna, his tongue in chanting the Lord's names and glories, his mind in remembering Krishna, his entire body in prostrating himself in supplication to the Deity and his hands in various types of service. Thus, because all his senses are engaged in receiving transcendental materials connected with the Supreme Lord, they also become transcendental. On the other hand, as much as the senses receive non-spiritual data, they will be influenced by material qualities. As a result, from the beginning of the devotional process, the devotee's body is partly material and partly spiritual. According to the indications of the Bhagavata verse (11.2.40) which compares advancement in devotional service to the satisfaction felt by a hungry man while eating, his gaining of strength and relief from the discomforts of hunger, one can understand that the process is progressive, for as much as one has eaten, that is the proportion to which he will feel these beneficial effects. Thus, as one progresses in spiritual life, the spiritualized portion of his body increases and the material portion is gradually reduced. When one reaches the stage of prema then his body is completely spiritualized and there is no mundane portion left. Thus the death of a devotee that is

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seen by all is to be known as nothing more than a kind of illusion and not at all real. The non-devotees consider that the devotee's body must also die. This false doctrine is maintained by the Lord just to keep devotional service closed to atheistic and self-interested persons. An example of this is the so-called "Club Pastime" of the Lord in which he created the illusion of the demise of the Yadu dynasty. One should know that this too is non-factual. On some occasions, the Lord does not make such an illusory show but rather seeks to illustrate the glories of devotional service, as in the case of Dhruba. Dhruba went to Vaikuntha in the selfsame body, thus it is to be concluded that the apparent death of Narada was also an illusion created by the Lord. The next question then is, what is to be gained by thinking that a devotee's body is beyond the material qualities? And conversely, what is lost by thinking it to be material? Why do disease, etc., manifest in a devotee's body if it is transcendental?

The response to these questions is as follows: By thinking a devotee's body to be transcendental, one's material existence comes to an end. To think it material results in increasing material entanglement and hellish suffering. Evidence is the Padma-purana verse beginning with vaishnave jati-buddhibh. The Lord allows the appearance of death and diseases in a devotee's body just to increase the materialists' entanglement: it should be considered a test of faith. Caitanya Mahaprabhu said the very same thing in connection with the appearance of sores on Sanatana Gosvami's body: "The Lord Krishna made these pus-filled sores appear on Sanatana's body just to

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test me. If I had not embraced him due to disgust at seeing them, I would have committed an offence and been punishable by the Lord.”

So much to the “happenings” of the material body of a devotee.

Let us now come to the internal aspect of this beautiful verse. Sri Krishna *bestows to the devotee a body which is spiritual like his own so that the devotee can engage in the service of his lotus feet.*

Here we have the actual evidence for the bestowing of siddha-pranali. At the time of initiation (diksha), we receive not only the mantras BUT ALSO a very wonderful gift of Sri Krishna: our siddha-deha, our eternal perfected body. Srila Jiva Goswami enlightens us:

vaikunthasya bhagavato jyotir-amsa-bhuta vaikuntha-loka-sobha-rupa ya ananta murtayas tatra vartante, tasam ekaya saha muktasyaikasya murtir bhagavata kriyata iti vaikuntasya murtir iva murtir yesham ity uktam ||

Priti- sandarbha 10

“In the spiritual world, the Supreme Lord has unlimited spiritual forms; they all are expansions of Himself illuminating that world. With each one

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of those forms, the Lord enjoys pastimes with a single individual liberated soul.”

Now, it is very important to understand the verse in question very clearly.

Srila Jiva Goswami writes that Krishna will GIVE a liberated soul who reached perfection a body “similar” to His. Many think that He “creates that form”, but this is not the case.

The siddha-deha is an eternally existing form.

Srila Jiva Goswami uses his words very thoughtfully.

He clearly says: KRIYATE. “KRIYATE” can mean many things.

A nice devotee explained the verse beautifully:

The root krin Sanskrit can actually have any meaning, it does not mean just “create”. It is akin to the English “do”.

One can express every activity with it. Kriyate in the passage does not mean that the spiritual body is created.

The text itself says that mūrtayas tatra vartante, they are there eternally, tāsām (out of them) ekayā saha (with one) muktasya (of the liberated) ekasya (of the one) mūrtir (body) bhagavatā (by the Lord) kriyate (assign), i.e. the Lord awards one of the bodies that eternally reside in Vaikuntha to the liberated one. vaikuntasya mūrtir iva mūrtir yesām, the body that one is given is similar (iva) to that of Lord Vaikuntha. Jīva Goswāmī wants to explain

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that one achieves bhagavat-tulyatvam at the stage of utkrānta-mukti (gone forth or out, gone over or beyond , passed , surpassed, trespassing , exceeding – Monier Williams) by quoting the Bhāgavata verse (3.15.14 vasanti yatra purusah) there (utkrānta-mukti-daśāyam tu tesām bhagavat-tulyatvam evāha). There is nothing like that that the spiritual body is created at some time. It is eternal. It is aprākṛta. The fact itself should make it clear that it can't be created. “

So we can clearly see that Krishna “assigns” such a form to the jīva who reached perfection.

But will Krishna “appear” at the time of initiation and tell us everything about our siddha deha?

No, it is Sri Gurudeva who reveals to us all information of our siddha deha. In Sri Gurudeva’s deep meditation, Sri Krishna reveals to him a siddha deha suitable for the bhava (mood) of the disciple. Then Sri Gurudeva, like a transparent medium, reveals this form to us.

Srila Jiva Goswamipada confirms this:

**kecid ashtadasakshara-dhyananam go-dohana-samaya-
vamsi-vadya-samakrishta-tat- tat-
sarvamayatvena bhavayanti | yatha caike tadrisam
upasanam sakshad vraja- jana-viseshayaiva mahyam**

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sri-guru-caranair mad-abhishta-visesha-siddhy-artham
upadishtam bhavayami || Bhakti-sandarbha 312

“Some, while remembering the eighteen-syllable mantra, meditate on the pastimes of tending cows and playing flute, becoming attracted and absorbed in them. In such upasana (worship), in order to attain my specifically desired perfection, I should meditate on that very form of a resident of Vraja my revered guru has instructed me in.”

So in our meditation on our diksha-mantas, we focus on the pastimes of the Divine Couple and we imagine ourselves to be maidservants of Srimati Radhika, as instructed by our Sri Gurudeva. “THAT VERY FORM OF A RESIDENT OF VRAJA” means for followers of Sriman Mahaprabhu the form of a manjari since He solely came to bestow upon us the gift of manjari-bhava-sadhana. The siddha-deha one longs to attain is not a figment of imagination. It is one among the infinite siddha-rupas in the spiritual realm.

In fact, beyond being expansions of bhagavan, the sakhi-gana with their various svabhavas are expansions of Sri Radha.

As we can read about our given manjari-forms in the Chaitanya Caritamrita:

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akara svabhava-bhede vraja-devi-gana |

kaya-vyuha-rupa tantra rasera karana ||

CaiCa 1.1.79

“The multitude of Vraja-gopis have various natures (svabhava). They are the forms of Her bodily expansions (kaya-vyuha-rupa) and Her instruments for creating rasa.”

The one desirous for service in the wake of the manjaris will certainly be granted an appropriate form for such service.

vraja-lokera kona bhava lana yei bhaje |

bhava-yoga deha pana krishna paya vraje ||

CaiCa 2.8.122

“Whoever accepts the bhava of the residents of Vraja, engaging in bhajana appropriate for that bhava, will receive a body suitable for it, attaining Sri Krishna in Vraja.”

So two things happen at the time of initiation:

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Srila Sanatana Goswami writes that our material body will be transformed by the touchstone of bhakti into a “spiritualized” body. Like a rod of iron is taking on all qualities of a fire when held long enough into it, so our material body will “take on” all qualities of bhakti. But this doesn’t mean that our material body changes into a siddha deha. It is true that our material body is “spiritualized” but still it will perish and we still will have to leave it “behind”. A siddha-deha has no beginning. What begins at the time of initiation is that we START to shift our IDENTIFICATION from our mortal body to our Krishna-given form.

At first we mentally conceive of the siddha deha. By progressing on the path of bhakti, at the higher stages like asakti and rati, this mentally conceived siddha deha becomes “REAL” to our love-filled eyes and we drop our identification with our material though “spiritualized” body.

At the time of death, when we have reached PREMA, Yogamaya lets us take birth in a universe where the eternal pastimes of the Divine Couple are manifested. We then go through the stages of childhood up to youth and when we reach our certain age, we eternally stay at that age and then again by Yogamaya’s power, we ARE in the eternal pastimes which are unmanifested.

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Since our minds think in logical terms and since we live in linear “time-thinking”, it is impossible to fully understand such a miraculous concept.

This nothing new.

The concept of the siddha deha in the realm of Gaudiya-theology makes its famous appearance in Sri Rupa Gosvami’s Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu, in a section where the practice of raganuga-bhakti-sadhana is explained.

**seva sadhaka-rupena siddha-rupena catra hi |
tad-bhava lipsuna karya vraja-lokanusaratah ||**

BRS 1.2.295

“One should serve both in his present sadhaka-form and in his siddha-form, following in the wake of the residents of Vraja, desiring to have feelings similar to theirs.”

So we serve with our “spiritualized” material bodies and with our mentally conceived, Krishna-given siddha dehas, according to our inner bhava.

Srila Narottama das Thakur makes an interesting comparison:

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yugala carana sevi, nirantara ei bhavi, anuragi thakibo
sadaya |

sadhane bhavibe yaha, siddha dehe pabe taha raga
marge ei sei upaya | |

PBC 55

“With attachment, I will always serve the feet of Sri Yugala, remaining attached to them forever. Whatever I think of during sadhana I will attain in siddha-deha; such is the means on the path of raga.”

sadhane ye dhana cai, siddha-dehe taha pai,
pakkapakka matra se vicara |
apakke sadhana-riti, pakile se prema-bhakti, bhakati-
lakshana tattva-sara | |

PBC 56

“The treasure I covet during my sadhana I will attain in my siddha-deha; It is merely a matter of ripe or raw. The stage of sadhana is unripe, and the stage of prema is ripe. This is the essential truth on the characteristics of bhakti.”

It is evident from the last verse that such meditation is not a matter of generic meditation, but of specific conceptions.

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The difference between a ripe mango and a raw mango is in the taste; a raw mango has the shape of a mango still.

In our lineage, Sri Gurudeva plays a very vital role in the process of diksha.

My Gurudeva, Srila Ananta das Babaji, follows the system like the one mentioned by Sripad Jiva Goswamipad – “while remembering the eighteen-syllable mantra,... in order to attain my specifically desired perfection, I should meditate on that very form of a resident of Vraja my revered guru has instructed me in.”

My Gurudeva, like many other sadhus in the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition, says that diksha is a process and the revealing of the siddha deha is included in that process.

When I asked him, he told me that according to the advancement of the sadhaka, Sri Gurudeva can reveal the siddha deha at the time of bhajana-kriya (after diksha-initiation).

Srila Narayana Maharaja said the following:

We have entered into the class of diksa, but our diksa is not complete. We are in class now, meaning that we are in the training or learning process. May God and guru shower their grace upon us so that we can receive full diksa – divya-jnana (realized transcendental knowledge) and divya-darshana (spiritual vision).

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When we fully realize our truest SELF, our eternal, Krishna-given siddha-deha, then the process of diksha is successfully accomplished.