

Srila Narottama das Thakur on raganuga-bhakti



with the commentary of Radhakund Mahanta

Sri Srimat Ananta das Babaji

(from Śrī-Śrī Prema Bhakti Candrikā with the tika of Srila Ananta das Babaji)

**rāgera bhajana patha, kōhi ebe abhimata,
loka veda sāra ei vāṇī
sakhīra anugā hoiyā, vraje siddha deha pāiyā,
ei bhāve juḍābe parāṇi (48)**

"Now I will tell you the opinion of the saints and the scriptures about the path of spontaneous devotion. These words are the essence of the popular and Vedic teachings. If you follow in the footsteps of the sakhīs you will attain a spiritual body in Vraja. In this way you will gratify your spiritual self."

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda's ṭikā — loka veda sāra ei vāṇī — iyaṁ vāṇī loka-vedayoḥ sāra rūpāḥ.

The ways of rāgānugā-bhakti:

Sudhā Kaṇikā vyākhyā —

From this tripadī onwards the worshipable Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya describes expertise in the ways of rāgānugā bhajana, most of all of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's great gift, the practice of mañjarī bhāva. First he says: rāgera bhajana patha, ebe kōhi abhimata, loka veda sāra ei vāṇī. This means that abhimata, according to the scriptures and the saints, we will speak of rāgera bhajana patha, the subject of rāga mārṅga bhajana. This vāṇī, teaching, of mine is the loka veda sāra, the essence of popular and scriptural sayings. This means that the words of the experienced followers of the path of rāga and rāga scriptures like Śrī Gopāla Tāpanī Śruti and Śrīmad Bhāgavata, the essence of the Vedānta, scriptures that elaborately describe all subject matters concerning rāga mārṅga bhajana, are the greatest. First of all, we can understand from these words of the blessed author that his teachings are not his mental fancies, and on the other hand we can understand in essence that the subject of rāga mārṅga is elaborately described by the scriptures and the saints. Therefore, those who want to know the essence of rāga mārṅga bhajana should most certainly study this Prema Bhakti Candrikā of Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya.

rāga mārṅga bhajana is an elaborate and confidential subject matter. This rāga bhakti is directly present within the eternally perfect residents of Vraja, the eternal associates of the Lord. Devotion in allegiance to them is called rāgānugā bhakti. Therefore 'rāgera bhajana patha' is understood to mean the path of rāgānugā bhakti here.

virājantīm abhivyaktaṁ vrajavāsi janādiṣu
rāgātmikām anusṛtā yā sā rāgānugocyate
(B.R.S. 1.2.273)

"The devotion which is evidently present within the residents of Vraja is called rāgātmikā and the devotion in its wake is called rāgānugā." Therefore, without first knowing the characteristics of rāgātmikā we cannot understand rāgānugā bhakti. The definition of rāgātmikā is as follows —

iṣṭe svārasikī rāgaḥ paramāviṣṭatā bhavet
tanmayī yā bhaved bhaktiḥ sātra rāgātmikoditā
(B.R.S. 1.2.272)

"The natural complete absorption in one's own chosen deity, or the loving thirst that lies as root to that paramount absorption is called rāga and devotion with an abundance of such rāga is called rāgātmikā bhakti."

The purport of this is that the natural deep loving thirst towards the chosen deity is called the svarūpa lakṣaṇa or the intrinsic characteristic of rāga. Just as the senses automatically engage in the tangible sense objects and do not depend on any encouragement, similarly the deep loving thirst towards the own desired Lord is natural for the rāga bhakta — it is not caused by anyone's encouragement.

Just as water turns into ice due to contact with frost, grass and other things can enter into water, but cannot enter into ice, similarly when loving thirst becomes very deep the heart of the loving devotee cannot seek even the slightest personal happiness anymore other than the happiness of Kṛṣṇa. Then all activities become centered around Kṛṣṇa's happiness. This deep thirst causes one to be fully absorbed in the chosen deity; this is the taṭastha lakṣaṇa or marginal characteristic of rāga.

ākṛti prakṛti dui svarūpa lakṣaṇa; kārya dvārā jñāna ei taṭastha lakṣaṇa (C.C.) - "Both the form and the nature are the intrinsic characteristics, and the knowledge acquired through activities is the marginal characteristic."

This rāgamayi or rāgātmikā bhakti is only present within the eternally perfect associates of the Lord in Vraja. Those who perform bhajana after becoming greedy after the particular feelings of the rāgātmikā Vraja-people and who follow the feelings of the rāgātmikā devotees according to their own mood, are practising a devotion named rāgānugā bhakti.

Following the practice of this rāgānugā bhakti the moonlight of rāga that shines within the hearts of the eternally perfect Vraja-people begins to rise within the heart of the practitioner of rāgānugā bhakti and begins to shine there.

yasya pūrvokte rāga viśeṣe rucir eva jātāsti na tu rāga viśeṣa eva svayaṁ tasya tādrśa rāga sudhākara karābhāsa samullasita hṛdaya sphaṭika-maṇeḥ śāstrādi śrutāsu tādrśā rāgātmikāyā bhakteḥ paripāṭiṣvapi rucir jāyate (Bhakti Sandarbha—310) - "When the moonlight in the heart of the eternally perfect rāgātmikā bhaktas shines on the crystal-like hearts of those devotees who became attracted to the aforementioned kind of passionate love, but who have not awakened that special passion themselves yet, and when they hear about the expertise, that is the loving - mental, physical or vocal - activities of these rāgātmikā bhaktas from the mouths of Guru and sādhu or from the scriptures, they also gain taste for such expert activities."

The purport of this is that when the hearts of the devotees are crystal clear, free from the contaminations of lust and anger, and they hear about the loving activities of the eternally perfect rāgātmikā bhaktas from the mouths of Guru, sādhu or śāstra, their hearts will light up just as crystal lights up when the moonlight shines on it, and taste will awaken for these devotees' loving activities. Driven by this taste they engage in a kind of devotion that follows in its wake and which is called rāgānugā bhakti.

Without allegiance to the rāgātmikā bhaktas this rāgānugā bhajana can never reach perfection.

vraja lokera bhāve yei koroye bhajana; sei jana pāy vraje vrajendranandana
śruti sab gopīgaṇera anugata hoyā; vrajeśvarī suta bhaje gopī bhāva loiyā
vyūhāntare gopī deha vraje jabe pāilo; sei dehe kṛṣṇa saṅge rāsa krīḍā koilo

gopī anugati vinā aiśvarya jñāne; bhajileho nāhi pāy vrajendra nandane
tāhāte dr̥ṣṭānta— lakṣmī korilā bhajana; tathāpi nā pāilo vraje vrajendranandana

"Whoever performs bhajana in the mood of the people of Vraja will attain Vrajendra-nandana in Vraja. All the Upaniṣads followed the path of the gopīs and worshipped the son of the Queen of Vraja in the mood of the gopīs. In another creation they attained gopī-bodies in Vraja, with which they performed the Rāsa-play with Kṛṣṇa. Even when worshipping Him, if it is not done in allegiance to the gopīs or with feelings of awe and reverence, Vrajendra nandana will not be attained. The example of that is Lakṣmī. She worshipped Kṛṣṇa, but still did not attain Vrajendra nandana in Vraja."

Vraja's eternally perfect associates of Kṛṣṇa come in four moods — of servanthood, friendship, parental love and conjugal love and thus there are also four kinds of people who yearn for these four kinds of moods. Those who yearn for the mood of servanthood will follow the eternally perfect servants Raktaka, Patraka and so, those who yearn for the mood of friendship will follow Kṛṣṇa's friends like Subala or Madhumaṅgala, those who yearn for parental love will follow parents like Nanda and Yaśodā, and those who yearn for amorous love will follow Śrī Rādhikā, Lalitā and others. In these way everyone accomplishes rāgānugā bhajana.

In this particular Kali-age Śrīman Mahāprabhu and the Gosvāmīs like Śrī Rūpa and Raghunātha dāsa, who have surrendered to His lotus feet, have distributed the worship of mañjarī bhāva or rādhā dāsyā which is in the topmost class of amorous love. This is the beloved rāgānugā bhajana of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya.

Hence Śrī Ṭhākura Mahāśaya has said: sakhīra anugā hoiyā, vraje siddha deha pāiyā, sei bhāve juṛābe parāṇī — "Being a follower of the sakhīs I will attain a spiritual body in Vraja. That feeling will soothe my heart."

The fish-like hearts of the kinkarīs or mañjarīs who have surrendered to Śrī Rādhā's lotus feet, freely swim in the ocean of rasa that arises from the meeting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the embodiment of deep transcendental flavours and eros personified, with Śrī Rādhārāṇī, who is filled with mahābhāva, and this gives them an ecstasy which is incomparable with any other bliss within the transcendental kingdom.

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practitioners who have surrendered to Śrīman Mahāprabhu's lotus feet will become greedy after this practice of mañjarī bhāva by the grace of Śrī Guru or the sādhus from their own tradition. When they take shelter of Śrī Guru's lotus feet they will become acquainted with their own nitya siddha mañjarī svarūpa and their intrinsic ekādaśa bhāva (eleven-fold spiritual personality).

In this way they continue doing bhajana externally, in their material practitioner-bodies, by hearing and chanting the Lord's glories, and in their mentally conceived spiritual mañjarī-bodies thinking around the clock about Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava's pastimes and their devotional service therein in allegiance to Śrī Lalitā and the sakhīs and Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī and the other mañjarīs.

After they attain the perfection of bhajana, or prema, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Yogamāyā-energy will bless the practitioners by giving them the direct devotional service of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā Mādhava in their mentally conceived spiritual body within the kingdom of līlā. In this way their hearts will be soothed or cooled off by attaining the long desired and thirsted-for service of Rādhā-

Kṛṣṇa in the mood of a maidservant of Śrī Rādhā. Nothing else can soothe the hearts of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practitioners — sei bhāve juṛābe parāṇī. (48)

**rādhikāra sakhī yoto , tāhā vā kohibo koto,
mukhya sakhī koribo gaṇana
lalitā viśākhā tathā, citrā campakalatā
raṅgadevī sudevī kathana (49)**

**tuṅgavidyā indurekhā, ei aṣṭa sakhī lekhā,
ebe koi narma sakhīgaṇa
rādhikāra saha-carī, priya preṣṭha nāma dhari,
prema sevā kore anukṣaṇa (50)**

"How can I count the number of Rādhikā's girlfriends? I will simply mention the chief sakhīs: Lalitā, Viśākhā, Citrā, Campakalatā, Raṅgadevī, Sudevī, Tuṅgavidyā and Indurekhā - these are the eight chief sakhīs. Now I will mention the narma-sakhīs (mañjarīs). These assistants of Śrī Rādhikā are called priya preṣṭha and are constantly rendering loving devotional service."

The dearest girlfriends:

Sudhā kaṇikā vyākhyā— In the previous tripadī Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya spoke of doing bhajana in allegiance to the nitya siddha rāgātmikā sakhīs and mañjarīs while defining rāgānugā bhajana, and now he is introducing us to some of the chief sakhīs and mañjarīs by mentioning their names. After knowing the svarūpas of Śrī Rādhā's sakhīs and mañjarīs we must proceed towards some tattva vicāra (consideration of principles), for the pastimes are built on the foundation of tattva siddhānta (philosophical and technical knowledge).

All the Vedic scriptures ascertain that Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Original Personality of Godhead, full in all opulences and might, the supreme truth and the cause of all causes. This embodiment of spirit (sa cid ānanda vigraha), the Almighty Śrī Kṛṣṇa, has innumerable potencies, of which three are predominant — the internal spiritual potency, the marginal potency of the individual souls and the external illusory potency. Of these, the internal potency is the greatest, for it is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's intrinsic energy. The ability to perform something is called śakti or power, and according to its activities this intrinsic energy shows three aspects — hlādinī, sandhinī and samvit.

Of these, the hlādinī potency is the greatest, for although Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of full and paramount ecstasy, He relish His intrinsic bliss through the hlādinī energy and makes His devotees relish the same. The special feature of this is that the hlādinī energy dwells within Śrī Kṛṣṇa's form in a formless, energetic way to make Him relish His intrinsic ecstasy and that formless hlādinī energy dwells on His outside in the form of its presiding goddess to make Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of full and deep erotic flavours, relish the sweetness of wonderful erotic mellows. This is Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī Śrī Rādhā.

The special activities of the hlādinī śakti make it gradually turn from rati, prema, sneha, māna, praṇaya, rāga and anurāga into mahā bhāva. This mahābhāva is the real form of Śrī Rādhārāṇī. Just as a puppet of sugar consists of sugar inside out, similarly each limb of Śrī Rādhārāṇī is made of mahābhāva or the prīti rasa known as mahā bhāva inside out. Lalitā and the other sakhīs are the expanding phalanx of Śrī Rādhā.

In this connection Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Madhya Ch.8) describes:

kṛṣṇera ananta śakti, tāte tin pradhāna; cicchakti, māyā śakti, jīva śakti nāma antaraṅgā, bahiraṅgā, taṭasthā kohi yāre; antaraṅgā svarūpa śakti sabāra upore sac cid ānandamoy kṛṣṇera svarūpa; ataeva svarūpa śakti hoy — tin rūpa ānandāmśe hlādinī, sad amśe sandhinī; cid amśe samvit yāre jñāna kori māni kṛṣṇake āhlāde tāte nāma hlādinī; sei śakti dvāre sukha āsvāde āpani sukha rūpa kṛṣṇa kore sukha āsvādana; bhaktagaṇe sukha dite hlādinī kāraṇa hlādinīra sāra amśa tāra prema nāma; ānanda cinmaya rasa premera ākhyāna premera parama sāra mahā bhāva jāni; sei mahābhāva rūpā rādhā ṭhākuraṇī premera svarūpa — deha prema vibhāvita; kṛṣṇera preyaśī śreṣṭhā jagate vidita sei mahābhāva hoy cintāmaṇi sāra; kṛṣṇa vāñchā pūrṇa kore — ei kārya yār mahābhāva cintāmaṇi rādhāra svarūpa; lalitādi sakhī tāra kāya vyūha rūpa

Not only Lalitā and the other sakhīs— all the girls of Vraja are Śrī Rādhārāṇī's expanding phalanx! According to their forms and dispositions they make Śrī Kṛṣṇa relish various kinds of wonder-filled sweet flavours, and for this reason Śrī Rādhārāṇī has expanded Herself into innumerable forms as all the Vraja-girls.

ākāra-svabhāva bhedo vraja devīgaṇa; kāya vyūha rūpa tāra rasera kāraṇa bahu kāntā vinā nahe rasera ullāsa; līlāra sahāya lāgi bahuta prakāśa tāra madhye vraje nānā bhāva rasa bhedo; kṛṣṇake korāya rāsādikā līlāsvāde (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Ādi Ch.4)

"The Vraja-goddesses (gopīs) appear in different forms and with different natures. They are all Rādhā's expansions and they are the cause of rasa. Without the presence of many consorts there can be no joy in rasa, therefore many consorts are manifested to assist in the pastimes. Of them, there are many kinds of consorts in Vraja with different dispositions and different flavours, that make Kṛṣṇa relish the Rāsa-līlā and other pastimes."

In the form of Her expanding phalanx, the countless gopikās, that have different moods and flavours, divided in four classes, namely the own party, the enemies' party, the friendly party and the neutral party, Śrī Rādhārāṇī makes Śrī Kṛṣṇa relish wonderfully sweet erotic flavours. Taking the root form Śrī Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī as the pivot, the four parties are there, mentioned according to their feelings. Śrī Lalitā, Viśākhā and other dearest girlfriends are Śrī Rādhārāṇī's own party, Śrī Candrāvalī, Padmā, Śaibya and others are the enemies' party, Śyāmalā and others are the friendly party and Bhadrā and others are the neutral party. The most relish is given by the own party and the enemies' party. Although all the Vraja-girls are expansions of Śrīmatī Bhānunandinī, and therefore there can be no question of any of them being Her equal, still Vraja's śṛṅgāra rasa has given Śrī Candrāvalī and others the feeling of equality with Śrīmatī in order to create the wonderful feelings of khaṇḍitā, māna and kalahāntarītā in Her, to make Śrī Kṛṣṇa relish wonderfully sweet mellows.

In the nourishment of all these emotional conditions the own party, containing Śrī Lalitā and others, play a very wonderful role. Although Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's love is all-pervading, and therefore requires no one's help in nourishment, still this love can never find nourishment without the aid of the sakhīs, just as brahman cannot carry the nourishment of rasa to display the wonder of līlā without the aid of its spiritual energy. vibhur api sukha rūpaḥ svaprakāśo'pi bhāvaḥ kṣaṇam api na hi rādhā-kṛṣṇayor yā ṛte svāḥ. pravahati rasa puṣṭim cidvibhūtir iveśaḥ śrayati na padam āsām kaḥ sakhīnām rasajñāḥ (Govinda Līlāmṛta 10.17)

sakhī vinu ei līlā puṣṭi nāhi hoy; sakhī līlā vistāriyā sakhī āsvāday (C.C.) - "Without the aid of the sakhīs these pastimes cannot be nourished. The sakhīs expand these pastimes and the sakhīs make them relishable."

Śrī Rādhā has five kinds of such sakhīs — asyāḥ vṛndāvaneśvaryāḥ sakhya pañca-vidhāḥ matāḥ sakhyaś ca nitya sakhyaś ca prāṇa sakhyaś ca kaścana. priya sakhyaś ca parama preṣṭha sakhyaś ca viśrutāḥ (Ujjvala Nīlamanī) — 'sakhīs, nitya sakhīs, prāṇa sakhīs, priya sakhīs and parama preṣṭha sakhīs. These are again divided into three classes — viśama snehā, sama snehā and adhika snehā. Kusumikā, Vindhya, Dhaniṣṭhā and others are sakhīs, they are viśama snehā and śrī kṛṣṇa snehādhikā (they love Kṛṣṇa more than Rādhā). Kasturī, Maṇi Maṇjarī and others are nitya sakhīs and Śaśimukhī, Vāsantī, Lāsikā and others are prāṇa sakhīs — they are adhika snehā or rādhā snehādhikā (they love Rādhā more than Kṛṣṇa) and are called maṇjarīs. Kuraṅgākṣī, Sumadhyā, Madanālasā are priya sakhīs and Lalitā, Viśākhā and the other leading aṣṭa sakhīs are the parama preṣṭha sakhīs— they are sama snehā, which means that though they love Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa equally, they still constantly cherish the self-esteem of 'We are Rādhā's'. First the blessed author mentions the main eight sakhīs : 'lalitā viśākhā tathā, citrā campakalatā, raṅgadevī, sudevī kothan. tuṅgavidyā indurekhā, ei aṣṭasakhī lekḥā. To teach the practising devotees some details about the sakhīs we are mentioning their names, dresses, natures and activities, on the basis of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Gaṇoddeśa Dīpikā (by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī).

Lalitā:

Śrī Lalitā is the greatest of all the eight sakhīs and she is 27 days older than Śrī Rādhārāṇī. She is also known as Anurādhā and is decorated with a vāmā prakharā (harsh-stood-up) nature. Her bodily complexion is of Gorocanā and her dress is like peacock feathers. Her mother's name is Śārādī, her father's Viśoka, her husband is a cowherd named Bhairava, who is a friend of Govardhana Malla.

Śrī Lalitā is the leader of all of Śrī Rādhārāṇī's girlfriends, and all the feelings of the pastimes of the Divine Pair are under her control. She is expert in causing a loving quarrel and in making a truce, during vighraha (quarrel), prauḍhi vāda (proud words), answers and rational arguments she angrily lowers her head and is concealed by the luster of the sakhīs.

When the Divine Pair get into a loving quarrel she gives the sakhīs presence of mind and enthusiastically coordinates the quarrel. Then, when the time has come for Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava's reconciliation or meeting she may go there, but she will stay there as if indifferent. She is very expert in making floral ornaments, umbrellas, beds and grove cottage-constructions and she is learned in conjuring tricks and composing riddles. Her service is making betelleaves with camphor and her kuñja is named Lalitānandana Kuñja. In her yūtha there are sakhīs like Ratnaprabhā, Ratikalā, Subhadrā, Bhadrarekhā, Sumukhī, Dhaniṣṭhā, Kalahāṁsī and Kalāpinī.

Viśākhā:

She is the second of the aṣṭa sakhīs, and her behaviour, attributes and dedication are exactly like her priya sakhī Śrī Rādhā's. She was born on exactly the same moment as Śrī Rādhā. Her bodily complexion is like lightning, her dress shines like clusters of stars, her father's name is Pāvana, her mother is Jaṭilā's niece Dakṣiṇā and her father's name is Vāhika Gopa. Viśākhā is expert in humorous dealings with the Divine Pair, hence she is called narma sakhī. Her advice is hard to overrule and she can speak joking words to Śrī Kṛṣṇa like no other. She knows the hearts of the Divine Couple and is expert in bringing messages and in sāma (appeasement), dāna (offering presents) and bheda (separating)-customs when the Divine Couple have an erotic dispute. She is very good at making leaf-tilaka, garlands, crowns etc., magic tricks,

puppet dance etc., collecting paraphernalia for Sūrya-pūjā, speaking different languages and in musical arts like the Dhruvā. Her service is dressing and ornamenting and her kuñja is named Viśākhānandada. Her yūtha consists of Mālātī, Mādhavī, Candralekhā, Kuñjarī, Hariṇī, Capālā, Surabhī, Śubhānā and other sakhīs.

Campakalatā:

Campakalatā is the third of the eight sakhīs. Her bodily complexion resembles a blooming Campaka flower, she is one day younger than Śrī Rādhā and her garments shine like Cāsa-birds. Her father is named Ārāma, her mother Bāṭikā, and her husband Caṇḍākṣa Gopa. Her attributes are like those of Viśākhā.

She is very expert in conveying messages and in concealing the purport of her activities. She is an eloquent speaker and knows various ways to discredit her enemies and glorify her own party. She is very expert in making pickles of fruits, flowers and roots, she is better than anyone in the making of clay pots, testing the six basic flavours and making sweets. For the last she is called 'Miṣṭa-hastā', or sweet handed one. Her kuñja is named Campakalatānandada Kuñja and her service is making jewel strings and fanning with a yaktail fan. The eight sakhīs in her yūtha are named Kuraṅgākṣī, Sucaritā, Maṇḍalī, Maṇikuṇḍalā, Candrikā, Candralatikā, Kandukākṣī and Sumandirā.

Citrā:

She is the fourth sakhī. Her bodily complexion resembles vermilion and her garments shine like glass. She is 26 days younger than Śrī Rādhā and is happy when Śrī Kṛṣṇa is happy. Her father is the cousin of Vṛṣabhānu-rājā, named Catura, her mother is named Carcikā and her husband Pīthara. She has free access to all expertise in performing her duties. She recognises all indications, knows languages from different areas and she can recognise honey, milk and other things on mere sight. She makes glass trays, bowls and glasses, can make waves appear in water, knows astrological books and the science of recognising animals. One of her duties is to plant and guard trees and she is most expert in making delicious drinks. Her kuñja is named Citrānandada Kuñja and her service is making clove-garlands. The eight sakhīs in her yūtha are Rasālikā, Tilakinī, Śaurasenī, Sugandhikā, Ramilā, Kāma Nāgarī, Nāgarī and Nāgavelikā.

Tuṅgavidyā:

Tuṅgavidyā is the fifth sakhī. She is five days older than Śrī Rādhā, her body shines like vermilion, her dress is yellow and her nature is dakṣiṇā prakharā (submissive, yet harsh). Her mother is named Medhā, her father is Puṣkara and her husband Bālīśa. Tuṅgavidyā is expert in eighteen sciences is expert in arranging truces, is the object of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's great trust, is expert in scriptures on Rasa (aesthetics), Nīti (manners), Nāṭaka (drama) and Ākhyāyika (narrations), and she is a music teacher. Her kuñja is named Tuṅgavidyānandada and her service is singing and dancing. The eight sakhīs in her yūtha are Mañjumedhā, Sumadhurā, Sumadhyā, Madhurekṣaṇā, Tanumadhyā, Madhusyandā, Guṇacūḍā and Varāṅgadā.

Indulekhā:

Indulekhā is the sixth sakhī. Her complexion is bright like Haritāla (yellow), her dress shines like pomegranate flowers, she is three days younger than Śrī Rādhā. Her mother is named Belā, her father Sāgara and her husband Durbala. Her nature is vāmā prakharā (harsh and unwilling). Indulekhā is especially able in mantras from the Sarpa-śāstras (serpentine scriptures), Vijñāna Mantra and astrology. She can make wonderful necklaces, paint teeth, test gems and make silken ribbons. The science of writing mantras of good fortune is given to her handpalms. Thus she extends the topmost fortune of creating mutual passion between Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava.

Raṅgadevī:

Raṅgadevī is the seventh sakhī. Her bodily luster resembles the filaments of a lotus; her dress is red like a Javā-flower. She is seven days younger than Śrī Rādhā and her attributes resemble those of Campakalatā. Her father is named Raṅgasāra, her mother Karuṇā and her husband Vakrekṣaṇa, who is again the younger brother of Lalitā's husband Bhairava. She extends astonishing humour and laughter (raṅga means fun, Ed.) to her priya sakhī Śrī Rādhārāṇī even before Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the past she performed penances to attain a mantra to attract Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Sudevī:

She is the eighth sakhī, the mild-natured twin-sister of Raṅgadevī. Her form, attributes and nature all resemble those of her twin-sister, so much so that if you look at her it seems as if you are seeing Raṅgadevī. The younger brother of Raṅgadevī's husband Vakrekṣaṇa, named Raktekṣaṇa, is the husband of Sudevī. She stays with Śrī Rādhā, and her services are arranging Her hair, making Her eyeliner and massaging Her body. She is most expert in teaching the male and female parrots how to sing, in playing boat, arranging cock-fighting, consulting from astrological books and by reading hand-lines, knowing the sounds of birds and animals and what flowers blossom when the moon rises. She knows the science of fire and is expert in giving a massage with oil.

After that Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says: ebe kōhi narma sakhīgaṇa; rādhikāra saha-carī, priya preṣṭha nāma dhari, prema sevā kore anukṣaṇa— After mentioning Śrī Rādhārāṇī's dearest girlfriends like Lalitā and so, he now mentions the narma sakhī mañjarīs. Although they are Śrī Rādhārāṇī's very dear sakhīs they are also her affectionate maidservants who are always immersed in Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava's service. Although they are in the class of sakhīs they are still dedicated to devotional service and their forms consist solely of the flavours of service. Hence their service is very relishable, hearty and filled with the erotic flavours of the Divine Pair. They must be specially known by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava-practitioners, for it is in their allegiance that they must serve. That is mentioned in the following tripadī. (49-50)

**sama snehā viṣama snehā, nā koriho dui lehā
kōhi mātra adhika snehā-gaṇa
nirantara thāke saṅge, kṛṣṇa kathā līlā raṅge
narma sakhī ei sab jana (51)**

"Equal affection for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa or more affection for Kṛṣṇa than for Śrī Rādhā - do not become attached to that. I will just speak about preference for Śrī Rādhā! They are always in Her company, blissfully telling Her about Kṛṣṇa. They are all called narma sakhīs."

Allegiance to the adhika snehās:

Sudhā kaṇikā vyākhyā — Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya establishes allegiance to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas' adhika snehā mañjarīs or rādhā snehādhikā mañjarīs by saying: sama snehā viṣama snehā nā korio dui lehā, kōhi mātra adhika snehāgaṇa. Previously we have mentioned the difference between Śrī Rādhārāṇī's five types of sakhīs, namely viṣama snehā or śrī kṛṣṇa snehādhikā, those who have a greater love for Kṛṣṇa, sama snehā or those who love Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa equally and adhika snehā or those who love Śrī Rādhā more than Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The blessed author says: "We will not do bhajana in allegiance to those who love Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa equally or those who love Śrī Kṛṣṇa more than Śrī Rādhā. Therefore, na koriho dui lehā —

We do not have to lehā, love them or be affectionate towards them." This does not mean that we should not love them or be indifferent towards them, for those who practise mañjarī bhāva have proper faith, respect, love and friendship for all the girlfriends of Śrī Rādhārāṇī. Therefore, the word lehā is understood to mean special love or allegiance to their feelings here. In his description of the distinction between the feelings of the viśama snehā and sama snehā sakhīs on the one hand and the feelings of the rādhā snehādhikā mañjarīs on the other hand, Śrīmat Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda has written —

sañcārī syāt samonā vā kṛṣṇa ratyā suhr̥d ratih
adhikā puṣyamāṇā ced bhāvollāsa itīryate (B.R.S.2.5.128)

"Those amongst Śrī Rādhārāṇī's sakhīs whose love for Śrī Rādhā is equal to or slightly less than their love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa have love for Kṛṣṇa as sthāyi bhāva within which their love for Rādhā is counted as a sañcārī bhāva (injected, infused, inserted feelings), for that nourishes their basic love for Kṛṣṇa. But those sakhīs who love Rādhā more than Kṛṣṇa and whose feelings are increased due to constant absorption in this have the status of bhāvollāsa because their feelings have come to dominate all feelings, although they are officially sañcārī bhāvas. Thus, despite it all, this adhika snehā must be counted as a sthāyi bhāva."

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas who have taken shelter of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's lotus feet and who follow the Six Gosvāmīs, headed by Rūpa and Sanātana, are following this upāsana (mode of worship) of mañjarī bhāva or bhāvollāsa. Thus the rāgānugā bhajana of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas who follow the nitya siddha mañjarīs of Vraja, who love Rādhā more than Kṛṣṇa, will be accomplished. Therefore, the blessed author does not mention the bhajana in allegiance to viśama snehā or sama snehā and only shows the path of allegiance to the adhika snehās or mañjarīs. This is the great gift of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and the most beloved goal of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. In the kingdom of bhāva sādhana, mañjarī bhāva is the pinnacle of relish that a living entity can ascend to!

Then, while defining the reason for which the adhika snehā mañjarīs relish more, Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says: nirantara thāke saṅge, kṛṣṇa kothā līlā raṅge, narma sakhī ei sab jana "All the sakhīs are eternal companions in Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava's pastimes, because although the feelings of the Divine Pair are all-pervading, they cannot find nourishment without the support of the sakhīs. Still there are no other associates than the mañjarīs who continuously stay with Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava during Their pastimes. By Śrī Rādhārāṇī's wish Lalitā and other sakhīs sometimes are heroines (lovers) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, therefore due to their equal feelings they cannot be there when the Divine Pair are having Their intimate pastimes — there would be shyness and embarrassment. But the mañjarīs who are endowed with bhāvollāsa are especially absorbed in the different services of the Divine Pair and due to their oneness in feelings with Her, Śrī Rādhārāṇī considers them to be non different from Her own body. Thus the mañjarīs never become heroines. They are also present when Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava have Their intimate meetings to engage in Their private service. At that time the Divine Pair consider them the āveśa mūrtis (embodiments of Their ecstatic absorption) of Their rasika pastimes, and thus there is no reason for Them to feel embarrassed and only these mañjarīs are constantly in the company of the Divine Pair. In his Śrī Vṛndāvana Mahimāmṛta (8th Śatakam) Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatīpāda has written about the sweet mood of the mañjarīs and how they are always present —

kṣaṇam caraṇa vicchedācchrīśvaryāḥ prāṇa hāriṇīm;
padāravinda saṁlagna tayaivāhar-nīśam sthitām
bahunā kiṁ sva kāntena krīḍantyāpi latā grhe;

paryañkādhīṣṭhāpitām vā vastrair vācchāditām kvacit

.....

rādhā padābja sevānya sprhā kāla trayojjhitām
rādhā prīti sukhāmbhodhāv apāre buḍitām sadā
rādhā padāmbujād anyat svapnānte'pi na jānatīm
rādhā sambandha saṁdhāvat prema sindhaugha mālinīm
seṣāśeṣa mahā vismāpaka kaśora rūpiṇīm;
kṣaṇe kṣaṇe rasāsvāda prodañcat pulakāvalīm
sarvāṅga kānti saundarya apāraiḥ sarva mohinīm
rādhā karmākulatayā tatra tatra vicālinīm

"Since they will die if they are separated from the lotus feet of their Īśvarī Śrī Rādhārāṇī, the mañjarīs stay with Her lotus feet day and night. What more can I say? When Śrīmatī enjoys with Her lover in the vine cottage She will take the mañjarī with Her onto the bed and sometimes even covers her with the sheets! The mañjarī does not desire anything but the service of Śrī Rādhā's lotus feet in all three phases of time — past, present, or future, and is always immersed in a boundless ocean of ecstatic love for Rādhā. Even in dreams she does not know anything else but the lotus feet of Rādhā. She is beautified by waves of the billowing ocean of prema for Śrī Rādhā, she has an adolescent female form that astonishes even the great gods and the entire universe, and she wears big goosebumps due to relishing rasa on her body at every moment. Rādhā's maidservants captivate everyone by the endless luster and beauty of their every limb and they always anxiously wander around here and there in Rādhā's service."

In this way the kiñkarīs are always with Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, enjoying their services when They meet, and in times of separation they relieve virahinī Rādhā from the pangs of separation by kṛṣṇa-kathā līlā raṅge, enjoying discussing topics of Kṛṣṇa. Then, when they view the pastimes of the Divine Pair, they keep these intimate pastimes marked on the canvases of their hearts with the pencils of prema, so that they can describe these blissful pastimes again to Śrīmatī at the time of separation. In this way they give shape to playful Śyāma in front of Śrīmatī. Also for this prasaṅga (conversational) form of devotional service the mañjarīs always stay with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Although they are always engaged in acts of service they are still known as narma sakhīs (intimate joking girlfriends). They extend tasty jokes to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, to Śrī Rādhārāṇī and again to the Divine Pair both, to give them topmost happiness according to the time.

Hence it is said: "They are all called narma sakhīs." (51)

**śrī rūpa mañjarī sāra, śrī rati mañjarī āra,
lavaṅga mañjarī mañjulālī.
śrī rasa mañjarī saṅge, kasturikā ādi raṅge,
prema sevā kore kutūhole (52)**

"Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī, Śrī Rati Mañjarī, Lavaṅga Mañjarī, Mañjulālī Mañjarī, Śrī Rasa Mañjarī, Kasturikā and others are blissfully rendering loving devotional service with each other."

nitya siddhā mañjarīs—

Sudhā kaṇikā vyākhyā — In this tripadī the blessed author mentions the names of the chief narma sakhīs or nitya siddha rāgātmikā mañjarīs by saying: śrī rūpa mañjarī sāra, śrī rati

mañjarī āra, labaṅga mañjarī mañjulālī; śrī rasa mañjarī saṅge, kasturikā ādi raṅge, prema sevā kori kutūholi. First of all, it is said: śrī rūpa mañjarī sāra. Here the word sāra is accepted to mean 'chief'. Of all the mañjarīs Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī is the greatest and the chief. In allegiance to her and under her control all the mañjarīs perform and accomplish their services to Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava.

Just as Śrīman Mahāprabhu would not listen to anyone's poetry before having it examined by Śrīpāda Svarūpa Dāmodara, the great knower of rasa, because if it contained rasābhāsa (incompatible flavours) or viruddha siddhānta (controversial theories) the Lord would suffer intolerably, similarly in Vraja, the new mañjarīs attain the eligibility to engage in the rasika service of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, when they passed Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī's examination. Otherwise it is not possible for anyone to attain the yugala sevā. We get a clear indication of this from Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya's 'Prārthanā pada'.

Here Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya describes his own mañjarī svarūpa. When he first attains the good fortune of yugala sevā he will collect all the paraphernalia for this yugala sevā on Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī's order, and remain standing behind her—

śrī rūpa paścāte āmi rohibo bhīta hoiyā; donhe puna kohiben āmā pāne cāiyā
sadaya hṛdaye donhe kohiben hāsi; kothāy pāile rūpa ei nava dāsī?
śrī rūpa mañjarī tabe donha vākya śuni; mañjulālī dilo more ei dāsī āni!
ati namra citta āmi ihāra jānilo; sevā kārya diyā tabe hethāya rākhilo
heno tattva donhākāra sākṣāte kohiyā; narottame sevāya dibe niyukta koriyā

"I will shyly stand behind Śrī Rūpa as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa look at me again, smile and ask Rūpa with kind hearts: 'O Rūpa! Where did you get this new maidservant?' Hearing Their inquiry, Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī then tells Them: 'Mañjulālī Mañjarī (the spiritual name of Śrīla Lokanātha Gosvāmī) has given me this maidservant to bring her before You! Knowing her to be very humble I kept her to serve You!' While she told Them this personally she will engage Narottama in Their service."

Here the words namra citta (humble attitude) indicates Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya's qualification for yugala sevā in mañjarī svarūpa and it is also clear from this that she has passed Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī's examination. Again, from the words sevā kārya diyā tabe hethāy rākhilo it is also clearly understood that Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī is in charge of bestowing yugala sevā. Therefore, following the words sādhanē bhāvibo jāhā, siddha dehe pābo tāhā of the upcoming tripadī nr.55 it is understood that during the time of sādhanā the sādhakas must mainly follow Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī in rendering service in their mentally conceived spiritual body.

In this couplet the names of six mañjarīs are mentioned, with the word ādi (beginning with) after 'Kasturi Mañjarī'. This ādi indicates that Śrī Guṇa Mañjarī and Vilāsa Mañjarī are also meant to be mentioned here. To facilitate the remembrance of the adhika snehās we are mentioning the acquaintances to the eight mañjarīs' complexions, dresses etc., offered by Śrīla Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī and Śrīla Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī in their Śrī Śrī Gaura Govindārcana Smaraṇa Paddhatis—

Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī—

kuñjo'sti rūpollāsākhyo lalitā kuñjakottare; sadā tiṣṭhati tatraiva suśobhā rūpa mañjarī
priya narma sakhī mukhyā sundarī rūpa mañjarī; gorocanā samāṅga śrīḥ keki patrāmśuka
priyā

sārdḍha tridaśa varṣāsau vāma madhyātvam āśritā; raṅgaṇa mālīkām ceti pravadanti
manīṣiṇaḥ
iyaṁ labaṅga mañjarī ekenāhnā kanīyasī; ratnabhānuḥ pitā mātā yamunā durmedhakaḥ patih
śvarśuś ca jaṭilā nāmnī pāda sevana tatparā; kalau gaura rase rūpa gosvāmitvaṁ samāgatāḥ

"In the north of Lalitānandada Kuñja is the kuñja named "Rūpollāsa, where the very beautiful Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī always resides. She is the chief of the priya narma sakhīs, or mañjarīs, she is very beautiful, her bodily luster resembles gorocana pigments, her dress is decorated with peacock feathers, she is 13 years and 6 months of age, and has attained the nature of vāma madhya. The learned also call her 'Raṅgaṇa-mālā'. She is one day younger than Labaṅga Mañjarī, her father is named Ratnabhānu, her mother 'Yamunā', her husband Durmedha and her mother-in-law Jaṭilā. She is dedicated to the devotional service of massaging the feet. In the age of Kali she has descended in the Gaura-avatāra as Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī."

Śrī Rati Mañjarī —

ratyambujākhyāḥ kuñje'stīndulekhā kuñja dakṣiṇe. tatraiva tiṣṭhati sadā surūpā rati mañjarī
tārāvalī dukūleyaṁ taḍit tulya tanu-cchabiḥ. dakṣiṇā mṛdvikā khyātā tulasīti vadantī yām
asyā vayo dvimāśādhya hāyanāstu trayodaśa. pitāsyā vṛṣabhaḥ kanto divākhyāḥ śārādā prasūḥ
śvaśruś ca sannikā proktā cāmara sevānāvitā; iyaṁ śrī raghunāthākhyāṁ prāpto gaura rase
kalau

"In the kuñja known as Ratyambuja (the lotus of Rati), south of Indulekhā's kuñja, the beautiful Rati Mañjarī always resides. Her dress is decorated with a cluster of stars and her body shines like lightning. She has a mild, submissive nature and is nick-named 'Tulasī'. She is 13 years and two months old. Her father is Vṛṣabha, her husband Diva and her mother is named Śārādā. Her mother in law is named Sannikā and her service is fanning. In the age of Kali she has descended as Śrī Raghunātha Dās Gosvāmī."

Śrī Labaṅga Mañjarī —

kuñjasya tuṅgavidyāyāḥ kuñjaḥ pūrvatra vartate; labaṅga sukhado nāmnā sudṛśāṁ
sumanoharaḥ
labaṅga mañjarī tatra mudā tiṣṭhati sarvadā; sā tu rūpākhyā mañjarī ekenāhnā varīyasī
udyad vidyut samāna śrīs tārāvalī paṭāvṛtā; śrī kṛṣṇānandadā nityaṁ dakṣiṇā mṛdvika matāḥ
vaya eka dinaṁ sārḍḍha hāyanāstu trayodaśa; śvaśrūḥ suśīlā pitarau yamunā ratna bhānukau
patisyān maṇḍalībhadrāḥ sarvābharaṇa sevikā; śrī sanātana nāmāsau khyātā gaura rase kalau

"East of Tuṅgavidyā's kuñja is the captivating grove of fair-eyed girls named 'Labaṅga Sukhada', where Śrī Labaṅga Mañjarī always blissfully resides. She is one day older than Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī, her body shines like an excellent lightning strike, her dress is decorated with a galaxy of stars and she always delights Śrī Kṛṣṇa with a soft and submissive nature. Her age is 13 years, 6 months and 1 day. Her mother is named Yamunā, her father Ratnabhānu, her mother-in-law Suśīlā and her husband Maṇḍalībhadrā. She serves with all kinds of ornaments. In the present Gaura-avatāra she has appeared in the form of Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī."

Śrī Rasa Mañjarī —

rasānandaprado nāmnā citrā kuñjasya paścime; kuñjo'sti tatra vasati sarvadā rasa mañjarī
śrī rūpa mañjarī samyag jīvātuḥ sā prakīrtitā; haṁsa pakṣa dukūleyaṁ phulla campaka
kāntibhāk

labaṅga mañjarī tulyā prāyeṇa guṇa sampadā; atīva priyatām prāptā śrī rūpa mañjarī śritā sandhāna caturā seyaṁ dautye kauśalam āgatā; trayodaśa śarad yuktā dakṣiṇā mṛdvikā matā pitā subhānur matā ca prema mañjarī saṁjñikā; patir viṭaṅkaḥ śvaśrūr ambhāvatī vastra sevikā sā kalau raghunāthākhyā yukta bhaṭṭatvam āgatā

"West of Citrā's kuñja is the kuñja named 'Rasānanda-prada', where Śrī Rasa Mañjarī, who is dearer than life to Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī, always resides. Her bodily luster resembles that of Campaka flowers and her dress shines like swans' wings. Because she has taken shelter of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī, who is as qualified as Labaṅga Mañjarī, she has become the object of her great love. She is expert in different inquiries and in the duties of relaying messages. Her age is 13 and she is endowed with a soft and submissive nature. Her father is named Subhānu, her mother Prema Mañjarī, her husband Viṭaṅka and her mother-in-law Rambhāvatī. Her service is dressing. In this Kali age she has appeared as Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa."

Śrī Guṇa Mañjarī —

aiśāne campakalatā kuñjāt kuñjo'sti śobhanaḥ; guṇānanda-prado nāmnā tatrāste guṇa mañjarī rūpa mañjarikā saukhyābhilāṣā sā prakīrtitā; javārājī dukūleyaṁ taḍit prakāra kānti bhāk kaniṣṭheyaṁ bhavet tasyās tulasyāstu tribhir dinaiḥ; śrī kṛṣṇāmoda dākṣiṇyam āśritā prakharoditā
vayo'syā eka māsādhyā hāyanāstu trayodaśa; saptaviṁśatibhir yuktaṁ dinaiś ca samudīritam candrabhānuḥ pitā matā yamunā gobhāṭaḥ patiḥ; śvaśrus tārāvalī jñeyā śayyā sevā parāyaṇa gopāla bhaṭṭa nāmāsau khyātā gaura rase kalau

"In the north eastern corner of Campakalatā's kuñja is the beautiful kuñja named 'Guṇānanda-prada' where Śrī Guṇa Mañjarī, who desires Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī's happiness, resides. Her bodily luster resembles lightning and her dress is colored (red) like Javā-flowers. She is three days younger than Tulasī Mañjarī and always delights Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Her nature is dakṣiṇa prakharā, submissive yet harsh, her age is 13 years, one month and 27 days. Her father is named Candrabhānu, her mother is named Yamunā, her husband Gobhāṭa, her mother-in-law Tārāvalī and her service is making the bed. In Śrī Gaura avatāra she descended in the form of Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa."

Śrī Vilāsa Mañjarī—

vaiśākha kuñjād āgneye kuñjo'sti sumanoharaḥ; vilāsānando nāmnātrāste vilāsa mañjarī vilāsa mañjarī rūpa mañjarī sakhyam āśritā; sva kāntyā sadṛśī cakre yā divyāṁ svarṇa ketakīm cañcarīka dukūleyaṁ vāmā mṛdvītvam āśritā; kaniṣṭhā rasa mañjaryāś caturbhir divasair iyaṁ svar bhānuḥ durbalā pitā matā patir viḍambakaḥ; śvaśrū ramābhidhāsyāś ca jala sevā parāyaṇā jīva gosvāmītam prāptā kalau gaura rase tvasau

"In the south eastern corner of Viśākhā's kuñja is the captivating grove named 'Vilāsānanda' where Vilāsa Mañjarī, who has a relationship of friendship with Rūpa Mañjarī, is residing. With her own bodily luster, she makes all objects that face her shine like divine golden Ketakī-flowers, her dress shines like a Cañcarīka (bee) and her mood is contrary, yet mild (vāmā mṛdvī). She is four days younger than Rasa Mañjarī, her age is twelve years old, 10 months and 26 days. Her father's name is Svarbhānu, her mother's Durbalā, her husband's Viḍambaka, and her mother-in-law's Ramā. Her service is providing water. In the Gaura-avatāra she is Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī."

Śrī Mañjulālī Mañjarī —

līlānandaprado nāmnā viśākhā kuñjakottare; tatraiva tiṣṭhati mudā śrī mañjulālī mañjarī
rūpa mañjarikā sakhya prāyeṇa guṇa sampadā; kiṁśuka puṣpa vastrāḍhyā tapta hema
tanucchahi

līlā mañjarī nāmnāsyā vāma madhyātvam āśritā; śrī rādhikā mano'bhijñā vastra sevā parāyaṇā
vayaḥ saptāha yuktāsau sārddha tridaśa hāyanā; kalau gaura rase lokanātha gosvāmitām gatā

"North of Śrī Viśākhā's kuñja is the grove named 'Līlānanda-prada' where Śrī Mañjulālī Mañjarī resides in topmost bliss. She is as qualified as Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī due to her loving friendship with her, her bodily complexion resembles molten gold, her dress is colored like a Kiṁśuka flower and another name of her is Līlā Mañjarī. Her nature is medium contrary (vāma madhya) and she serves Śrī Rādhārāṇī, knowing exactly what is on Her mind. She is dedicated to the service of dressing Her. Her age is 13 years, 6 months and 7 days and in the Gaura-avatāra she is Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī."

Śrī Kastūrī Mañjarī —

kastūryānandado nāmnā sudevyāḥ kuñjakottare; tatraiva tiṣṭhati mudā sadā kastūrī mañjarī
kāncatulyāmbārā cāsau śuddha hemāṅga kāntibhāk;

mañīndra maṇḍanair yuktā śrīkhaṇḍa sevanotsukā

vayas tridaśa varṣāsau vāmāmṛdvītvam āśritā; śrī kṛṣṇa kavirājākhyām prāptā gaura rase kalau

"North of Sudevī's kuñja is 'Kastūryānanda-kuñja' where Kastūrī Mañjarī always resides. Her body shines like pure gold, her dress shines like glass, she is decorated with the finest ornaments, she renders sandal-service, her age is 13, her nature is vāma mṛdvī (contrary, yet soft) and in this age of Kali she has appeared in the Gaura-avatāra as Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Kavirāja."

Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says: "In the company of these nitya siddhā mañjarīs I will enthusiastically and blissfully render loving service to Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava — prema sevā kori kutūholī. Here the word kutūholī must be understood to have a special meaning. In his 'Camatkāra Candrikā', Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda has used the word 'kutūhala' to express his eagerness to have darśana of captivating scenes. Hearing and chanting are also synonyms of darśana, or beholding, here. The only cause and propeller of rāgānugā bhajana is the heart's sacred greed to attain feelings similar to those of the expert nitya siddhā kiṅkarīs as they render service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, by hearing and chanting of Their sweet forms, attributes and pastimes. When the rāgānugīya sādhaka becomes greedy after the feelings, expertise or service of the aforementioned nitya siddhā mañjarīs, he will meditate on his loving devotional service in his mentally conceived spiritual body in allegiance to them and in their company, and attains them in bhāva siddhi (perfection of developing the desired feelings). It is believed that the word kutūholī is used to indicate that.

Another meaning of kutūholī is said in the dictionary to be kautukī which is used in the Vaiṣṇava scriptures as 'amusement', 'joy', 'astonishment', 'eagerness', 'amazement', 'festival', 'humor' etc. All these meanings are to be known to reach perfection in meditation on devotional service rendered to the Yuga-lā Kīśora in allegiance to the nitya siddhā kiṅkarīs and in their company. In other words, meditations on and attainment of such devotional service in svarūpa siddhi is accomplished with pleasure, joy, astonishment, eagerness, amazement, as a festival for the eyes and mind and in great humour. The intelligent devotees will easily

become acquainted with evidence of all this by studying the rasa śāstras, out of fear of increasing the bulk of this book I did not mention them.

Some editions of this book mention the alternative reading of prema sevā kore kutūholī. In this the meaning is found that the abovementioned nitya siddhā mañjarīs render loving service to Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava with such kutūhala or kautuka. With this reading the following tripadī is seen with comparatively greater consistency. (52)

**e sabhāra anugā hoiyā, prema sevā nibo cāiyā,
īṅgite bujhibo sab kāja.
rūpe guṇe ḍagamagi, sadā hobo anurāgī,
vasati koribo sakhira mājha (53)**

"I will render loving devotional service in allegiance to them all. Simply on their hints I will understand what is my duty. I will always be passionately absorbed in Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's forms and qualities while residing amongst the sakhīs."

Prayer for loving service —

Sudhā kaṇikā vyākhyā — In this tripadī Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya reveals his aspiration for attaining the loving service in the wake of the nitya siddha mañjarīs and the consequent qualification.

First of all, he says — e sab anugā hoiyā, prema sevā nibo cāiyā, īṅgite bujhibo sab kāj. Vraja bhajana cannot reach siddhi without one following in the footsteps of the nitya siddha rāgātmikā pārśadas (the eternally perfect associates of Kṛṣṇa).

rāgamayī bhaktir hoy rāgātmikā nāma;
tāhā śuni lubdha hoy kon bhāgyavān;
lobhe vrajavāsī-bhāve kore anugati
(C.C.)

"Devotion full of spiritual attachment is called rāgātmikā bhakti. If a fortunate soul becomes greedy after that he will start following the people of Vraja."

By following the Vraja-gopīs the sages of the Daṇḍaka forest and the personified Vedas became themselves Vraja-gopīs and attained the service of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, but on the other hand the goddess of Vaikuṇṭha, Lakṣmī devī, could not attain Śrī Kṛṣṇa's company, despite the fact that she lived in Vraja and performed penances there. This is described in Śrīmad Bhāgavata and other Purāṇas. In this connection Śrīman Mahāprabhu told Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa —

śruti sab gopīgaṇer anugata hoiyā; vrajeśvarī suta bhaje gopībhāva loiyā
vyūhāntare gopī deha vraje jabe pāilo; sei dehe kṛṣṇa saṅge rāsa krīḍā koilo
gopa jāti kṛṣṇa — gopī preyasī tāhār; devī vā anya strī kṛṣṇa nā kore aṅgikāra
lakṣmī cāhe sei dehe kṛṣṇera saṅgama; gopikā anugā hoiyā nā koilo bhajana
anya dehe nā pāiye rāsa vilāsa; ataeva 'nāyaṁ' śloka kohe veda vyāsa (C.C.)

"All the personified Vedas followed the gopīs and worshipped the son of the Queen of Vraja in their mood. When they attained a gopī body in another age they could play the Rāsa-dance

with Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is of the cowherd-caste and the cowherd girls are His sweethearts — He will not accept goddesses or other ladies in that feature. Lakṣmī wanted to associate with Kṛṣṇa, but she did not worship Him in allegiance to the gopikās. She could not attain the Rāsa dance in another body, thus Vedavyāsa spoke the verse 'nāyaṁ śriyo'ṅga u nitanta rateḥ prasādaḥ (Bhāg. 10.47.60)."

The blessed author says: 'Following in the footsteps of Śrī Rūpa and other mañjarīs' prema sevā nibo cāiyā, which means: "From them I will accept the loving service of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā Mādhava." Here not just the word 'service' has been used, but 'loving service'. This has a special purpose. Love is the best ingredient for serving the Lord, if there is no love in the heart of the servant, the Lord cannot attain pleasure from the fruits, water and foodstuffs offered by him. Hence it is said in Padyāvalī —

nānopacāra kṛta pūjanam āta bandhoḥ premnaiva bhakta hṛdayaṁ sukha vidrutaṁ syāt
yāvat kṣudanti jaṭhare jaraṭhā pipāsā tāvat sukhāya bhavato nanu bhakṣya peye

"O devotee! The heart of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Who is the friend of the distressed, melts when He is lovingly worshipped with different ingredients. For instance, as long as there is powerful hunger and thirst within the stomach, water and food will be a source of happiness." The eager love of the devotee will awaken a strong desire within the heart of the Lord to accept the ingredients of his service.

Rādhā's maidservants are the embodiments of sevā rasa, and their svarūpas entirely consist of sevā rasa. Their love is so pure and great that their hearts' love culminates into a form of service. Their love is just like iron that gets red hot in identification with the fire in which it is laid by the blacksmith. Their love and their service become so identical that they become an indivisible thing. Hence it is said prema sevā. This prema sevā is to be asked from the nitya siddha kiṅkarīs. Rādhā-Mādhava's prema sevā is their own treasure. When they are so kind to bestow it upon a sādḥaka then he is able to achieve it. The words prema sevā nibo cāiyā indicate that the sādḥaka's expertise in bhajana and the resultant loving eagerness are all there to invoke their grace. Through their anxious prayers such eager kiṅkarī bhāva sādḥakas must beg the loving service of Śrī Rādhā Mādhava from them (the nitya siddhas). They are also most merciful and when they see the eagerness of such a qualified new maidservant they bless her with the proper devotional service — this is suggested with the words prema sevā nibo cāiyā.

After that it is said: iṅgite bujhibo sab kāja. By Śrī Rādhārāṇī's grace the kiṅkarīs are able to understand the hints She makes through any medium — Her glances, words, hands and feet — śrīśvarī drṣṭi vāg ādi sarveṅgita vicakṣaṇām (Śrī Vṛndāvana Mahimāmṛtam 8.33) - "Rādhā's maidservants are able to understand all of their Prāṇeśvarī's hints, expressed through the glances and the words."

They are also expert in all respects in understanding the hints given by the sakhīs and the mañjarīs headed by Śrī Rūpa. Their service is rendered in parakīya madhura rasa, and unless they understand all hints, rendering service will be impossible for them. Once an intense love game was taking place within the kuñja. sakhīs and mañjarīs quietly kept their eyes at the slits in the kuñja-walls to fill their eyes with the relish of the yugala mādḥurī. When the sound 'tu' is heard Their absorption in play is broken. Unless the sakhīs and mañjarīs understand this hint in all respects they won't be qualified for service and their attainment of service will be impossible. Apart from rendering service within the kuñja, the kiṅkarī must also be expert in catching Śrīmatī's hints when She is at home. In the morning Jaṭilā enters Śrī Rādhārāṇī's

bedroom to wake Her up. Hearing the calls of Her mother-in-law Śrīmatī, who is tired of Her nocturnal pastimes, wakes up and sits up in Her bed. Viśākhā-sakhī becomes afraid when she sees the signs of lovemaking on Śrīmatī's limbs — if that old hag sees it everything is lost! Viśākhā then gives a hint with her eyes to Śrīmatī's surrendered maidservants and these maidservants, who understand each hint, will immediately conceal the signs of lovemaking with a dye unguent. In this way one needs to be expert in understanding all hints while rendering devotional service within parakīya madhura rasa — "iṅgite bujhibo sab kāj".

After that it is said: "rūpe guṇe ḍagamagi, sadā hobo anurāgī, vasati koribo sakhī mājha" - "I will always remain attached to and immersed in Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava's yugala rūpa." This means that I will always remain immersed in the sweet relish of the Yugala's ever-fresh forms and attributes and in the sweetness of Their devotional service."

Another meaning is that by following the mañjarīs one becomes qualified to attain prema sevā and expertise in performing all duties. The sādḥaka will then be immersed in the bodily beauty of a rādhā kiṅkarī and in their different attributes such as humility and good behaviour. This meditation of the mañjarī bhāva sādḥaka on the forms and qualities of the own siddha svarūpa runs as follows —

śrī guroś caraṇāmbhoja kṛpāsikta kalevarām;
kiśorīm gopa vanitām nānālaṅkāra bhūṣitām
pr̥thu tuṅga kuca dvandvām catuḥ ṣaṣṭhi kalānvitām;
rakta citrāntarīyam āvṛta śuklottarīyakām
svarṇa citrāruṇa prānta muktādāma sukāñcalīm;
candanāguru kāśmīra carccitāṅgīm madhusmitām
sevopāyana nirmāṇa kuśalām sevanotsukām;
vinayādi guṇopetām śrī rādhā karuṇārthiṇīm
rādhā kṛṣṇa sukhāmoda mātra ceṣṭām supadminīm;
nigūḍha bhāvām govinde madanānanda mohinīm
nānā rasa kalālāpa śālinīm divya rūpiṇīm;
saṅgīta rasa sañjāta bhāvollāsa bharānvitām
tapta kāñcana śuddhābhām sva saukhya gandha varjjitām;
divānīśam mano madhye dvayoḥ prema bharākulam;
evam ātmānam īśam bhāveded bhaktim āśritam

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sādḥaka who has taken shelter of the path of bhakti always thinks of himself as someone with the adolescent body of a cowherd girl, which is adorned with various ornaments and is sprinkled with the honey of the Guru's grace, whose breasts are firm and raised, who is well trained in 64 arts, who wears a red variegated dress and a white veil, a nice blouse endowed with a pearl string and wonderful golden and red borders (that were all given by Śrī Rādhārāṇī as prasāda when She was satisfied with service rendered to Her), whose body is anointed with sandalwood pulp, aloe and vermilion, whose face is adorned with a sweet smile, who is very expert in manufacturing articles for the service of the Yugala, who is very enthusiastic to render devotional service, who is endowed with all saintly qualities such as humility, who hankers for Śrī Rādhā's grace, whose every activity is aimed at making Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa happy, who is a nice Padminī girl (the best of four kinds of girls), who has intimate feelings for Śrī Govinda, who is in His turn captivated by erotic bliss upon seeing her (according to the quality and quantity of his love the loving devotee awakens a certain amount of desire to accept his service in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's heart, that is its nature. Even in dreams Śrī Rādhā's maidservants do not desire to amorously unite with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Thus, although they are fit to be Yūtheśvarīs due to being very beautiful and qualified, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa sees their

sevāmaya vighraha He becomes overwhelmed by erotic bliss and desires to unite with them — this is their secret feeling towards Govinda. In this way their feelings are more special and secretive than those of the sakhīs), who speaks in a very rasika and artistic manner, who has a lustrous, divine body and who is full of joyful feelings caused by saṅgīta rasa (musical flavours).

In this way the sādḥaka always establishes his self esteem in the form of a beautiful and qualified adolescent cowherd girl with a love-filled heart, thinking himself to reside amongst the sakhīs. (53)

**vṛndāvane dui jana, catur-dike sakhīgaṇa
samaya bujhibo rasa sukhe
sakhīra iṅgite hobe, cāmara ḍhulābo kobe,
tāmbūla yogābo cānda mukhe (54)**

"This Divine Couple resides in Vṛndāvana, surrounded by Their girlfriends. I will blissfully serve Them according to the time (of the year or the day). When will the sakhīs give me a hint to fan Them with a yaktail-fan or to place betelleaves in Their moon-like mouths?"

Service in rasa sukha —

Sudhā kaṇikā vyākhyā— In this tripadī Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya gives an indication of anurāgamaya sevā-meditation of the rāga sādḥakas who are in mañjarī bhāva. In the previous tripadī an indication was given of the siddha svarūpa of the sādḥaka. In this siddha svarūpa the anurāgī rāgānugā practitioner mentally dwells amongst the sakhīs and mañjarīs in Vraja-dhāma, the kingdom of līlās. How the sādḥaka then renders mānasī sevā is thus indicated — "vṛndāvane dui jana, caturdike sakhīgaṇa, samaya bujhiyā rasa sukhe. sakhīra iṅgita hobe, cāmara ḍhulābo kobe, tāmbūla yogābo cānda mukhe" Within the matchlessly beautiful environment of Śrī Vṛndāvana, the kingdom of rasa, the sādḥaka meditates on the Divine Pair, that is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Who is the śṛṅgāra rasarāja mūrti, the king of transcendental erotic mellows, and Śrī Rādhārāṇī, who is the embodiment of mahābhāva, and Who is endowed with matchless beauty, attributes and passionate love. The Yugala Kīśora is surrounded by the sakhīs, who are the reflections of Śrī Rādhārāṇī, and who are swimming in the high waves of the ocean of rasa and prema of Śrī Rādhā-Śyāma which is full of laughter and joking, beauty, love and passion. In his 'Prārthanā Gītikā' Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya has drawn a wonderful bhāva picture of this —

vṛndāvana ramya sthāna, divya cintāmaṇi dhāma
ratana mandira manohara
āvṛta kālindī nīre, rāja haṁsa keli kore,
tāhe śobhe kanaka kamala
tāra madhye hema-pīṭha, aṣṭa dalete veṣṭita,
aṣṭa dalete pradhānā nāyikā
tāra madhye ratnāsane, bosī āchena dui jane,
śyāma saṅge sundarī rādhikā
o rūpa lāvaṇya rāśi, amiyā poḍiche khasi,
hāsyā parihāsa sambhāṣaṇe
narottama dāsa koy, nitya līlā sukhamoy,
sadāi sphuruka mora mone

"The lovely place named Vṛndāvana is an abode made of divine thought-gems. There is a charming jewelled temple, surrounded by the current of the Yamunā and her rivulets, where lordly swans are playing amongst beautiful golden lotus flowers. In the middle is a golden platform surrounded by eight petals, where the leading heroines (aṣṭa-sakhīs) reside. In the middle of that is a jewelled throne upon which two persons are sitting - Śyāma and His beautiful Rādhikā. An abundance of nectarean elegance drips from Their transcendental forms and They are engaged in laughing and joking with Each other. Narottama dāsa says: "May these eternal pastimes always remain manifest within my mind."

The blessed author has also written —

kadamba tarura ḍāla, nāmiyāche bhūme bhāla,
phuṭiyāche phula sārī sārī
parimale bharalo, sakala vṛndāvana,
keli kore bhramarā bhramarī

"So many rows of flowers blossom on the branches of the Kadamba-tree that they are bowing down to the ground. All of Vṛndāvana is permeated with their fragrance and this causes the male and female bees to play around."

rāi kānu vilasaye raṅge
kibā rūpa lāvani, vaidagadhi khani dhani,
maṇimaya ābharaṇa aṅge

"Rāi and Kānu are enjoying Their playful sports. How beautiful are Their forms, how clever are They, and how brightly Their ornaments are shimmering!"

rādhāra dakṣiṇa kara, dhari priya giridhara,
madhura madhura colī yāy
āge pāche sakhī-gaṇa, kore phula variṣaṇa
kono sakhī cāmara ḍhulāya

"Dear Giridhārī walks along ever-so-sweetly, holding Rādhā's right hand. Behind and in front of Them the sakhīs shower flowers and some sakhī fans Them with a yaktail fan."

parāge dhūsara sthala, candre kore suśītala,
maṇimaya vedīra upore
rāi kānu kara joḍi, nṛtya kore phiri phiri,
paraśe pulake tanu bhare

"Rāi and Kānu hold hands and dance around and around on a jewelled stage which is greyed by pollen and cooled by the moon, Their hairs standing on end of ecstasy when They touch Each other."

mṛgamada candana, kore kori sakhīgaṇa,
variṣaye phula gandha rāje
śrama-jala bindu bindu, śobhā kore mukha indu,
adhare muralī nāhi bāje

"The sakhīs keep musk and sandalpaste in their hands and throw fragrant flowers. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's moonlike faces are beautified by sweatdrops and Kṛṣṇa cannot play His flute anymore."

hāsyā vilāsa rasa, sarasa madhura bhāsa,
narottama manoratha bhoru
duhuka vicitra veśa, kusuma racita keśa,
locana mohana līlā koru

"Narottama's desires are fixed on the mellows of Their joking pastimes and Their sweet and juicy talks. With Their wonderful dresses and Their flower-decorated hairs They perform pastimes that enchant the eyes."

The descriptions of those who have directly experienced the sweetness of the pastimes of the Yugala Kīśora and Their sakhīs with their bhāva-eyes in the līlā-kingdom of Śrī Vṛndāvana, are the very life sustenance of the meditations of the sādhakas. The sāmājika sādhakas (sensitive devotees) can experience how nicely a picture of the sweet pastimes of the Yugala with Their sakhīs in Vṛndāvana has been drawn in the above mentioned pada. The rāgānugīya sādhakas can understand when their time has come to render blissful rasika devotional service to Śrī Yugala Kīśora, as They are surrounded in the transcendental kingdom of Śrī Vṛndāvana by Their sakhīs, who are a great ocean of beauty, attributes and pastimes. samaya bujhiyā means serving according to the hot or cold season, according to the time of the day in circumstances as abhisāra (love journey), milana (meeting), vilāsa (love making) and viccheda (separation), and in the two different branches of service, paricaryā (practical service) and prasaṅga (hearing and chanting etc.). rasa sukhe means the happiness that arises from the passionate service of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava and Their sakhīs, and the happiness that arises from relishing the sweetness of Their forms, attributes and pastimes. svayaṁ bhagavān (the Original Personality of Godhead) paratama tattva (the topmost principle of transcendental truth) mādhyama mūrati (the embodiment of sweetness) vrajendra nandana (the prince of Vraja) Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a billowing ocean of nectarean beauty, attributes and pastimes, and through rāgānugā bhakti the relish of this sweet rasa is available.

The ocean of sweetness of this Kṛṣṇa expands beyond limits when He is in the company of Śrī Rādhārāṇī and Her girlfriends. Only Śrī Rādhā through Her mādanākhyā mahābhāva is able to fully relish this limitlessly sweet rasa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says—

adbhuta ananta pūrṇa mora madhurimā; trijagate ihār keho nāhi pāy sīmā
ei prema dvāre nitya rādhikā ekali; āmāra mādhyamīṛta āsvāde sakali (C.C.)

"My sweetness is wonderful, limitless and complete, and no one in the three worlds can match with it. Through Her prema only Rādhikā can relish all of My nectarean sweetness."

By Śrī Rādhārāṇī's grace the sakhīs and mañjarīs that have taken shelter of Her lotus feet are constantly swimming in the boundless ocean of rasa of the Yugala's sweetness. Nothing in the spiritual world can match this bliss of sweet savour. This is the highest stage of rasika bliss that a jīva can reach through sādhana bhajana. Here again it is to be known that this rāgānugā bhajana can never be practised in this current human body, that consists of five gross material elements. Therefore, during his sādhana the sādhaka conceives of another, very captivating body, that resembles that of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī and others, and which is known as siddha deha, within his mind. By the grace of Śrī Gurudeva, who is experienced in bhajana, the sādhakas become acquainted with this siddha deha. Śrī Gurudeva, who is non different from Śrī

Bhagavān, introduces the rāgānugā sādḥaka to his eternally perfect transcendental body, along with ekādaśa bhāva (the eleven-fold spiritual personality) which is an abode of beauty within the spiritual sky, on the strength of his antaryāmīva śakti, the power received from the Supreme Lord, Who is the Inner Monitor. The Gosvāmīs have called such a body (siddha deha) the body which is suitable to render direct personal service to Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava. In this siddha deha the sādḥaka lives within the circle of sakhīs in Vraja-bhūmi, meditating on rendering direct devotional service to Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava with them. Those who have gained a slight vision of this siddha deha have also experienced the wonderful rasika bliss of such a mental service. No one is able to explain this merely through writing comments.

After this Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya said: sakhīra iṅgita hobe, cāmara ḍhulābo kobe, tāmbūla jogābo cānda mukhe — The hearts and minds of Rādhā's maidservants are so merged with Śrī Rādhārāṇī's feelings, that Śrī Rādhārāṇī considers them to be non different from Her own body. By the wish of Śrī Rādhārāṇī Her girlfriends may sometimes enjoy pastimes of intimate meeting with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but Her maidservants do not accept this position even in dreams. Therefore, these maidservants are blessed with an even more intimate service to the Yugala than the sakhīs.

tāmbūlārpaṇa pāda-mardana payo dānābhisārādibhir
vṛndāraṇya maheśvarīm priyatayā yās toṣayanti priyāḥ
prāṇa preṣṭha sakhī kulād api kilāsaṅkocitā bhūmikāḥ
kelī bhūmiṣu rūpa mañjarī mukhās tā dāsikāḥ saṁśraye
(Vraja Vilāsa Stava —38)

"I take shelter of Śrī Rādhikā's maidservants, headed by Rūpa Mañjarī, that always engage in serving betelleaves, massaging the feet, serving water, and arranging for the Divine Couple's secret trysts. These maidservants are even more dear to the great Queen of Vṛndāraṇya (Śrī Rādhikā) than the prāṇa preṣṭha sakhīs (the girlfriends that are dearer to Her than life), and She is therefore not at all shy before them!" When, during the kuñja vilāsa, the Śrī Yugala become exhausted, the sakhīs give hints to the mañjarīs that they should engage in their scheduled services, and on these indications the mañjarīs proceed to the playground of the Yugala without hesitation and engage in services such as providing water and betelleaves and fanning Them.

rati-raṇe śramayuta, nāgarī nāgara
mukha bhari tāmbūla yogāya
malaya-ja kuṅkuma, mṛga-mada karpūra,
militahi gāta lāgāya

aparūpa priya sakhī prema!
nija prāṇa koṭi, dei niramāñchai,
naha tula lākho bāṇa hema

"How wonderful is the love of the priya sakhīs! They serve Nāgarī (heroine Rādhikā) and Nāgara (hero Kṛṣṇa) with millions of lives when They are tired of love-making, by filling Their mouths with betelleaves and by anointing Their bodies with sandalwood paste, vermilion, musk and camphor. Their love is so pure that it cannot even be compared to gold molten a hundred thousand times over!"

manorama mālya, duhu gole arpai,
vijai śīta mṛdu bāta

sugandhī śītala, koru jala arpaṇa,
yaiche hota duhu śānta

"They offer enchanting garlands to Their necks, give Them cool breezes by fanning Them, and relieve Them from Their heated affliction by offering Them cool and fragrant water."

duhuka caraṇa puna, mṛdu saṁvāhana,
kori śrama korolohi dūra
iṅgite śayana, korolo duhu sakhī-gaṇa
sabahu manoratha pūra

"These sakhīs again softly massage Their feet and thus remove Their fatigue. On Their indication they put the Divine Pair to rest and fulfill any of Their other desires."

kusuma śeje duhu, nidrita herai,
sevana parāyaṇa sukha.
rādhā mohana dāsa, kiye herabo,
meṭabo sab mano-dukha

"These girls, that are totally dedicated to their devotional service, then put the Divine Pair to sleep on a bed of flowers. All the mental distress of Rādhā Mohana dāsa is mitigated when he sees this."

**yugala caraṇa sevi, nirantara ei bhāvi,
anurāgī thākibo sadāya.
sādhana bhāvibo yāhā, siddha-dehe pābo tāhā
rāga pathera ei se upāya (55)**

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

The similarity of practice and perfection—

Sudhākṇikā vyākhyā — The varieties and the results of the sevā cintana of the rāgānugīya sādha that was hinted at by the blessed author in the previous tripadī are further described in this tripadī. rāgānugīya gauḍīya vaiṣṇava sādhas establish their abhimāna (self esteem) into the own siddha svarūpa received from Śrī Guru and then proceed in meditating on their devotional services within Śrī-Śrī Gaura-Govinda's aṣṭakāla līlā. gauḍīya vaiṣṇavācārya Śrīmat Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda has briefly described the aṣṭakālīn līlā within his own composition 'Smarāṇa Maṅgala Stotram'.

On the basis of this, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja Gosvāmīpāda has very elaborately described Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's aṣṭakālīn līlā in his scripture Śrī-Śrī Govinda Līlāmṛta, and thus blessed the assembled devotees with a celestial Ganges-current of līlā rasa.

In later times Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda has given more elaborate descriptions of those pastimes that were only briefly described in Govinda Līlāmṛta in his scripture Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhāvanāmṛta, and thus increased the storehouse of aṣṭakāla līlā rasa in all respects. Since it is not possible to perceive the pastimes of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Govinda without meditating on the pastimes of Śrī-Śrī Gaurāṅga, later the resident of Govardhana Śrīla Kṛṣṇa dās Siddha Bābā was visited by Śrī Rādhārāṇī Herself, Who ordered Him to publish something that would suit

meditation on Śrī-Śrī Gaura-Govinda's aṣṭakālīn līlā. After receiving this order from his worshipable goddess, Śrīla Siddha Bābā compiled the Śrī Gaura Govinda Līlāmṛta Guṭikā, making the manual completely fit for the practice of līlā smaraṇa.

To make the assembly of sādhakas relish the aṣṭakālīn līlā rasa through the realisations of the mahājanas, Śrīla Siddha Bābā compiled a large anthology of aṣṭakālīn līlā called 'Bhāvanā Sāra Saṅgraha'.

In this way the mahājanas of yore largely increased the jewel-storehouse of Śrī-Śrī Gaura-Govinda's aṣṭakālīn līlās, that make up the confidential worship of the rāgānugīya gauḍīya vaiṣṇavas that have taken shelter of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's lotus feet. While constantly meditating on these aṣṭakālīn līlās the gauḍīya vaiṣṇava sādhakas meditate on their own favorite services within these pastimes. Hence Śrī Ṭhākura Mahāśaya is saying: 'yugala caraṇa sevi, nirantera ei bhāvi, anurāgī thākibo sadāy' — "I will always think of the devotional service of the lotus-feet of the Divine Pair, and I will always remain attached to that." While considering the limb of smaraṇa within the framework of the nine kinds of devotional practice in his Bhakti Sandarbha-scripture, Śrīmat Jīva Gosvāmīpāda has shown the necessity of thinking of Śrī Hari, by quoting evidence from Śrī Garuḍa Purāṇa—

ekasminn apy atikrānte muhūrte dhyāna varjite
dasyubhir muṣitenaiva yuktam ākranditum bhr̥ṣam

"One must weep for each moment that was not spent meditating on Śrī Hari, just as one cries out after having been robbed of all one's possessions by a robber."

Thus the mahājanas have prescribed aṣṭakāla līlā smaraṇa, so that the bhakti sādhakas would not lose one moment of the eight time periods of the day and night, and so that they would be blessed with the loving service of the lotus feet of their beloved deities. Those who do not depend on scriptural injunctions, but are only subdued by devotional greed and eagerness to follow the bhāva of the nitya siddha rāgātmika vrajavāsīs (which is not the same as imitating them), and who are eternally engaged in rendering mental service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā Mādhava, while meditating on Their pastimes, are called rāgānugīya rasika bhaktas. Hence it is written about the practice of rāgānugā bhakti:

bāhya antara ihāra dui to sādhana; bāhya — sādha dehe kore śravaṇa kīrtana
mane nija siddha deha koriyā bhāvana; rātri dine kore vraje kṛṣṇera sevana (C.C.)

"There are two kinds of sādhana — external and internal. Externally one practises hearing and chanting with the sādha body, and internally one mentally conceives of one's siddha deha in which one serves Kṛṣṇa in Vraja day and night."

Therefore, rāgānugīya gauḍīya vaiṣṇava sādhakas are averse to the mundane world and wander around in the kingdom of bhāva in svarūpāveśa. In this way they always spend their lives passionately doing bhajana. anurāgī thākibo sadāy. While thus doing bhajana in allegiance to the nitya siddha svarūpa-śaktis one becomes identified with their feelings. Then, by the grace of the śrī guru rūpā mañjarī the sādha attains siddhi and he will be blessed with Śrī Śrī Rādhā Mādhava's kuñja sevā in mañjarī svarūpa in Vraja-dhāma.

Hence Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says: 'sādhane bhāvibo yāhā, siddha dehe pābo tāho, rāga pathera ei se upāya'. There is a most transcendently scientific truth hidden in the manual of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas' meditation on aṣṭakāla līlā.

In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (3.14.1) it is seen — yayā kratuḥ asmiṇloke puruṣo bhavati tathetaḥ pretya bhavati sa kratuḥ kurvīta, meaning:

"Whatever mentality a jīva maintains in the world, he will be endowed with that mentality also when he goes from this place (meaning: when he leaves his current body).
Let therefore the aspirant take shelter of this mentality."

In the Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad (4.4.5) it is seen: sa yathākāmo bhavati tat kratūr bhavati tat karma kurute yat karma kurute tad abhisāṃpadyate iti. -

"The jīva acts according to his desires, completes these actions and consequently reaps their fruits."

Elsewhere in the Upaniṣad it is seen: yathā yathopāsate tad eva bhavantīti — "As one worships and meditates, so one becomes."

In the Gītā (8.6), the Lord has said: yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaraṇ bhāvaṁ tyajantyante kalevaram. taṁ tam evaiti kaunteya sadā tad bhāva bhāvitaḥ - "Whatever one constantly thinks of during life is what one will remember at the time of leaving the body, and whatever one thinks of while leaving the body will be attained in the next existence."

This is the scientific truth about the power of constant meditation, which is also found in Śrīmad Bhāgavata —

kīṭaḥ peśaskṛtaṁ dhyāyaṁ kuḍyāṁ tena praveśitaḥ
yāti tat sātmatāṁ rājan pūrva rūpam asantyajam

"As a powerful cockroach besieges a worm in his hole, he causes the weak worm to assume the form of a cockroach due to constant meditation on him in sheer terror, without the worm even having to leave his body!" If deep meditation on mundane objects has such power, then there should be no room for doubt about the transcendental devotional power of meditating on the Lord, Who has a transcendental form which is supremely true, by a true devotee. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Śrī Uddhava (Bhāg. 11.15.26) —

yathā saṅkalpayed buddhyā yadā vā mat paraḥ pumān
mayi satye mano yuñjāns tathā tat samupāśnute

"A devoted person who meditates on Me, Who am also called satya saṅkalpa, He Who keeps His promises, will get any of his thoughts fulfilled exactly according to his wishes." Such meditation of the sādḥaka, which induces the shelter of the Supreme Lord and which is a powerful assistant to bhakti, which is the essence of the Lord's pleasure potency, can never result into vain imagination.

In his sādḥana he is meditating on his service to Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava throughout the eight times of the day, and he will achieve this in his siddha deha, or his mentally conceived mañjārī-body which was revealed (to which he was introduced to) by Śrī Guru. This can never be altered or watered down. This is the greatest means of attaining the desired siddhi in rāga bhajana. (55)

**sādhane ye dhana cāi, siddha dehe tāhā pāi,
pakkāpakka mātra se vicāra
apakke sādhanā rīti, pākile se prema-bhakti,
bhakati lakṣaṇa tattva sāra (56)**

"The treasure I desire as a practitioner I will get when I attain my spiritual body; it's just a question of being ripe or unripe. The ripe stage is the stage of pure loving devotion and the unripe stage is the stage of practice. That is the essential truth about devotional principles."

The essence of the truth:

Sudhā Kaṇikā vyākhyā— In the previous tripadī Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya explained how sādhanā and siddhi are qualitatively identical, and in this tripadī he uses an analogy to ascertain this more firmly —'sādhane ye dhana cāi, siddha dehe tāhā pāi, pakkāpakka mātra se vicāra' sādhanā bhakti, bhāva bhakti and prema bhakti are sequential, qualitatively identical, stages of each other.

The treasure of direct loving service that the rāgānuga sādhanā desires as he performs his sādhanā of meditating on Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava's service, he will attain when he achieves prema siddhi in his siddha svarūpa. When laulyamayī bhakti (greedy devotion) is not yet fulfilled, but moves towards siddhi, it is called sādhanā bhakti. When this becomes intense it is called prema bhakti. Hence it is said —siddhasya lakṣaṇam yat syāt sādhanam sādhanasya tat (Bṛhad Bhāg. ṭikā) "What is the characteristic of siddhi, is the practice of the sādhanā." sādhanā bhakti always keeps the desire for the attainment of prema bhakti or direct service awake; this is the nature of sādhanā bhakti.

Hence the blessed author says: sādhane ye dhana cāi. Insatiability is the nature of bhakti; the more advanced the sādhanā becomes in his devotional practice, the more eagerness and anxiousness he will feel rising in his heart. This eagerness and anxiousness will help the sādhanā to attain the kingdom of prema siddhi or direct service.

There is also a great relish in sādhanā bhakti, especially in the līlā smaraṇa of the rāga sādhanā. Their meditation is just like rendering direct service, therefore the wonderful relish they savour during their sādhanā is incomparable. Then if the sādhanā is satisfied with that and he does not awaken a feeling of lacking of prema or direct devotional service, finally a situation of self-satisfaction may arise in which the sādhanā's advancement in bhakti sādhanā will be blocked. sādhane ye dhana cāi — these words explain this fact in a hidden way.

The wealth craved for in the stage of sādhanā, meaning the direct loving service of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava in Vraja yearned for by the sādhanā, will be attained within the siddha deha after prema is attained, this is for sure — siddha dehe tāhā pāi.

After giving initiation into kāma bīja and kāma gāyatrī, Śrī Gurudeva bestows siddha praṇālī, so that the disciple gets knowledge of his distinct relationship with the deity and about the śrī yugalopāsanā, the means to worship the Divine Pair.

In it, the disciple will become acquainted with the name, complexion, age, nature and the other of the eleven aspects of his or her siddha svarūpa. The learned knowers of the truth call that initiation ceremony through which all sins are destroyed and divine knowledge is bestowed, dīkṣā — divyaṁ jñānaṁ yato dadyāt kuryāt pāpasya saṅkṣayam tasmād dīkṣeti sā proktā deśikais tattva kovidaiḥ.

In the 283rd paragraph of Śrī Bhakti Sandarbha, Śrīmat Jīva Gosvāmīpāda gives the following explanation of the above mentioned words divyaṁ jñānaṁ - divyaṁ jñānaṁ hyatra śrīmatī mantre bhagavat svarūpa jñānaṁ tena bhagavatā sambandha viśeṣa jñānaṁ ca yathā padmottara khaṇḍādāv aṣṭākṣarādīkam adhikṛtya vivṛtam asti, meaning:

"Here the word divya jñāna refers to knowledge of the empowered mantra being the very form of the Lord, and that through it the aspirant will achieve knowledge of his specific relationship with the Lord, Who is the Presiding Deity over the mantra. In this connection there is an explanation of mantras like the 8-syllable mantra in the Uttara Khaṇḍa of Śrī Padma Purāṇa, wherein this meaning of the words divya jñāna is determined."

In the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sampradāya the knowledge of this specific relationship means the ekādaśa-bhāva, the eleven-fold relationship of the sādḥaka with the mantra devatā Śrī Gopījana vallabha, or mañjarī svarūpa. In the Pātāla Khaṇḍa of the Padma Purāṇa we find descriptions of how the practitioners who have taken shelter of madhura-rasa and who know the principle of Kṛṣṇa-rasa, meditate on their siddha deha which is suitable for mentally rendered devotional service. 'nādevo devam arcayet' 'devo bhūtvā devam yajet'. In other words, 'unless the sādḥaka is a god he cannot worship Godhead', and 'being himself a god, he can worship Godhead'.

These scriptural statements of rule and prohibition firmly establish the need for the bhakta who aspires for the service of the Lord to do bhajana while thinking of himself as a personal associate of the Lord. Such meditation of the pārṣada rūpa (form of an associate of the Lord) by the sādḥaka is a meditation on the siddha deha.

Some think: "At first the sādḥaka can take shelter of an imagined mental body, and then later, when the Lord is satisfied with his sādḥana bhajana, according to the rule of yādṛśī bhāvanā yasya siddhir bhavati tādṛśī , He will make the sādḥaka's ātmā His associate. In this way, although the pārṣada body of the sādḥaka is real, it is an imagination in the stage of meditation."

This is, however, not the conclusion approved of by the śāstras and the mahājanas.

In Śrīmad Bhāgavata (3.15.14) it is described:

vasanti yatra puruṣāḥ sarve vaikunṭha mūrtayaḥ.
ye'nimitta-nimittena dharmenārādhayan harim

"Those persons who live in Vaikunṭha have transcendental bodies just like Vaikunṭha (Lord Viṣṇu) and they worship Lord Śrī Hari there constantly through causeless devotional service."

Commenting on this śloka, Śrīmat Jīva Gosvāmīpāda has written in the 10th paragraph of his Prīti Sandarbha — *vaikuṇṭhasya bhagavato jyotir amśa bhūtā vaikuṇṭhaloka śobhā-rūpā yā anantā mūrtayaḥ tatra vartante tāsām ekayā saha muktasyaikasya mūrṭiḥ bhagavatā kriyata iti vaikuṇṭhasya mūrtir iva mūrtir yeṣām ityuktam.*

The basic meaning of this saying by Śrīmat Jīva Gosvāmīpāda is that there are two kinds of associates of the Lord in the Supreme Abode, one that is engaged in the Lord's direct service, and the other that is eternally present in innumerable transcendental, yet non-functioning forms, that are like sparks from the Lord's radiant form and are the treasures of Vaikuṇṭha-loka's beauty.

Each of the innumerable jīvas is an eternal servant of the Lord, and each of them is staying in the abode of the Lord in a body that is suitable for the Lord's service.

By the grace of bhakti one becomes qualified for the service of the Lord and by the Lord's grace that body will be attained.

In the siddha praṇālī that is received from the lotus feet of Śrī Guru within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya, the acquaintance with this body is attained. No one should consider this to be imaginative. This is eternal and real. Of all the innumerable abovementioned forms situated in the abode of the Lord, there is one form in which the Lord will accept the sādḥaka.

On the strength of his meditation Śrī Gurudeva is aware of this and is conferring the proper siddha deha to the disciple. While the sādḥaka performs his sādḥana, he establishes his self-esteem into this form, and when he attains prema siddhi he is blessed with direct devotional service within this body. *pakkāpakka mātra se vicāra.*

pākile se prema bhakti, apakke sādḥana gati, bhakati lakṣaṇa tattva sāra. - Just as a fruit is bitter in the unripe stage and sweet and juicy in the ripe stage, similarly when sādḥana bhakti ripens it becomes known as prema.

Although in the stage of sādḥana the relish is slightly transient, due to the presence of anarthas and so, in the stage of prema bhakti the relish is very deep.

By saying *apakke sādḥana gati*, Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya is hinting at some of the principles of sādḥana bhakti. One of the meanings of the word *gati* is 'flow'. Just as the Mandākinī constantly flows towards the ocean and will not stop unless and until it reaches the ocean, similarly the Mandākinī-flow of sādḥana bhakti constantly flows towards the ocean of prema bhakti. Although its fruits are compared with ripe and unripe stages, still the thirst for prema bhakti remains constantly awake within the heart of the sādḥaka, thus constantly awakening the tendency towards sādḥana bhakti within him that leads him towards the kingdom of prema. That point is consistent in this part of the tripadī. Another meaning of the word *gati* is that sādḥana bhakti is the means to attain prema bhakti, but is also the goal itself. This means that it embodies prema bhakti, which has been indicated in the example of the ripe and unripe fruit. Or it means that sādḥana bhakti is both the means and the goal, because the relish of sādḥana bhakti is also not less.

Even the premika bhaktas covet the relish of sādḥana bhakti. Those who relish ripe mangoes also like the taste of unripe mangoes — in the form of mango pickles for instance. Another meaning of the word *gati* is 'sort'. Then *apakke sādḥana gati* means the stages of sādḥana bhakti from śraddhā (faith) up to āsakti are the unripe phase, bhāva bhakti or rati is the slightly ripe phase, and prema bhakti is the fully ripe stage. In some editions of this book we can find the reading '*apakke sādḥana rīti*'. Here *rīti* is understood to be indicating the aforementioned sequence.

Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says this is bhakati lakṣaṇa tattva sāra, meaning that whatever is coveted during the stage of sādhanā is attained at the time of siddhi. The only difference is that it is unripe in the phase of sādhanā and ripe in the phase of siddhi. This is the essence of the devotional principle. Another meaning can be that the secrets of mañjarī bhāva sādhanā that have been revealed from tripadī 52 'śrī rūpa mañjarī sāra' up to this current tripadī are the characteristics of the essence of the principles of bhakti or the carama niryāsa (ultimate extract). The characteristics of the essence of the principles of bhakti are selfless service to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. There is no comparison to the pure and selfless service of the mañjarīs to be found anywhere, they embody the summit of selflessness. (56)

**narottama dāse koy, ei yeno mora hoy,
vrajapure anurāge vāsa.
sakhīgaṇa gaṇanāte, āmāre likhibe tāte,
taba hi pūrabo abhilāṣa (57)**

"Narottama dāsa says: 'May I live in Vrajapura with deep devotional attachment. My desires will be fulfilled when I am counted and written down among the sakhīs.'"

Living in Vraja with anurāga—

Sudhā kaṇikā vyākhyā— In this tripadī Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya desires to live in Vraja with anurāga (constant attachment) and to be counted amongst the sakhīs. Here we can understand that he prays for living in Vraja with anurāga both in the sādhanā- and the siddha-deha.

First we shall speak of living in Vraja with anurāga within the sādhanā deha. anurāga here does not mean the anurāga which is counted amongst the sthāyī bhāvas, for that can not take place within the sādhanā body. Thus Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya reveals the aspiration to live in Vraja with love, loving attachment and respect. Śrīmad Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda advises the rāgānugīya sādhanas to constantly live in Vraja— kuryad vāsaṁ vraje sadā (B.R.S). Even more so, those who are unable to live in Vraja physically, are instructed to aspire to live in Vraja mentally. The reason for this is that, by the inconceivable power of Vraja-dhāma, bhāva will swiftly awaken within the heart of a non-offensive sādhanā as a result of living in Vraja — durūhādbhuta vīrye'smin śraddhā dūre'stu pañcake; yatra svalpo'pi sambandhaḥ saddhiyāṁ bhāva janmane (B.R.S. 1.2.238) "Associating with sādhus, hearing the Bhāgavata, serving the vigraha, performing nāma saṅkīrtana and residing in Vraja — each of these five items of sādhanā are so incomprehensible and wonderfully powerful, that, even if they are performed without faith, even the slightest contact with them by the non-offensive sādhanā will awaken bhāva within his heart."

The question may be asked now: "In his proper sequence of sādhanā bhajana the sādhanā must ascend different steps, from śraddhā up to āsakti, to be able to arrive in the kingdom of bhāva— how can then even the slightest contact with these five items of sādhanā awaken this bhāva?

To this Śrī Rūpa answers: alaukika padārthānām acintyā śaktir īdṛśī; bhāvaṁ tad viṣayaṁ cāpi yā sahaiva prakāśayet (B.R.S. 1.2.244) - "These five extraordinary practices have such an inconceivable power that even the slightest touch with them can reveal both bhāva and the object of bhāva."

But the sādḥaka will have to live in Vraja with anurāga, meaning with respect, love and loving attachment, otherwise he will commit offences to the holy dhāma and as a result of the dhāma being dissatisfied with him there will be a very long delay in the attainment of the desired result. After he suffers for a long time and repents, the holy dhāma will become satisfied and will make the attainment of the desired result of living in the dhāma possible.

Secondly, there is no other place anywhere in the universe like Vraja that can give such great arousement to the rāgānugīya sādḥaka in his bhāvamaya vraja-vāsa upāsana (ecstatic worship in the form of living in Vraja). Let alone the material world, for the perfection of Vraja-bhāva Śrī Uddhava Mahāśaya advised Gopa Kumāra to give up even Vaiṣṇava, all the way up to Ūrdhva Dvārakā (upper Dvārakā) and to live in the terrestrial Vraja. This is described in Śrī Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta (2:5:243-244)—

tatraivotpadyate dainyaṁ tat premāpi sadā satām
tat tac chūnyam ivāraṇya sarid giryādi paśyatām
sadā hā-hā ravākrānta vadanānām tathā hr̥di
mahā santāpa dagdhānām sva priyaṁ parimṛgyatām

When the sādḥus see the empty forests, rivers and mountains in the terrestrial Vraja, love and humility always automatically awakens within them. The sādḥus there are always lamenting and always seek their beloved deity with greatly afflicted, anxious hearts." When Śrīla Gopa Kumāra arrived in the terrestrial Vraja he attained a similar mood —

sadā mahārtyā karuṇa svarai rudan nayāmi rātrir divasāms ca kātaraḥ
na vedmi yad yat sucirād anuṣṭhitam sukhāya vā tat tad udārti sindhave
kathāncid apyākalayāmi naitat kim eṣa dāvāgni śikhāntare'ham
vasāmi kiṁ vā paramāmṛtāccha suśītala śrī yamunā-jalāntaḥ (2.6.3-4)

Śrī Gopakumāra told Śrī Jana-Śarmā: "O brahman! When I came to terrestrial Vraja I always wept with great anxiousness. In other words, I was so agitated that I called out 'O Lord!' with a pitiful voice. In this way day and night passed. For a long time, I practised all these things, but whether it brought me great happiness or immersed me into an ocean of great misery, I don't know. I could not understand at all whether I was living day and night within the flame of a forestfire or whether I resided within the sweetest, clear and cool water of the Yamunā."

This is a sweet picture of how to live in Vraja with anurāga within the sādḥaka body. Śrī Rūpa, Sanātana, Raghunātha and the other of the six Gosvāmīs thus set the best example of how to live in Vraja with great anurāga.

Also in this tripadī the desire is revealed to live with anurāga in Vraja, the playground of the Lord, directly within the siddha deha.

In his 'Ānanda Candrikā'-tīkā of Śrī Ujjvala Nīlamanī (3.49-51) as well as in his 'Rāga Vartma Candrikā'-booklet, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda has shown with logic and reason how the sādḥaka takes birth in the kingdom of līlā in his mentally conceived siddha deha and how he lives in Vraja with anurāga.

The gist of his explanation runs as follows: "Those who are specially attracted to the ecstasy of the Vrajavāsīs and thus perform rāgānugā bhajana will attain that abundance of eagerness that is fit for performing rāgānugā bhajana and will take birth in Vraja in groups of one, two or three in their own time, according to their eagerness."

The words 'taking birth in Vraja' means the sādhanā siddhas take birth from the womb of a gopikā in their mentally conceived siddha dehas, just as Kṛṣṇa's eternally beloved gopīs appear with Him when He descends to earth (prakāṣa līlā). After that, gradually sneha, māna, prañaya, rāga, anurāga and mahābhāva will become manifest in the gopikā-body of that sādhanaka on the strength of associating with the gopīs that are endowed with mahā-bhāva and by hearing and chanting and seeing the greatness of Kṛṣṇa's eternally liberated gopīs. In the sādhanaka deha one can advance upto the stage of prema.

The stages of sneha up to mahābhāva can not arise within the sādhanaka deha. Without taking birth from the womb of a gopī in the house of a cowherd one can not get a proper acquaintance according to the human-like pastimes there, like: "Whose daughter is this sakhī? Whose wife is she? Whose daughter-in-law is she?"

After the sādhanaka-body perishes, that loving devotee, who is fully engaged in his sādhanā and who has eagerly desired direct devotional service for a long time, will once, by the Lord's grace, receive the gift of the desired service and the audience of the Lord and His eternal associates, either in a dream or directly, even though he has not yet attained the manifestations of prema like sneha and so.

Just as the Lord once bestowed a spiritual body on Śrī Nārada Muni (after he had a similar snap vision of the Lord in his previous birth), similarly He will give the sādhanaka the transcendental gopikā-body he has meditated on all the while. Yogamāyā will make that body take birth from a gopikā-body in the manifest pastimes, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa descends to earth with His eternal associates, so that he can attain prema siddhi from the stage of sneha upwards. There will be not even the slightest delay in that, because the eagerness of the premika for attaining direct loving service at that time will take him immediately to the kingdom of līlā, there is no other means. Nevertheless for the ripening of prema-stages like sneha and because of attaining the siddhi of taking birth in a gopī-body in the nara līlā (human pastimes) he must first be taken to the prakāṣa līlā. The prakāṣa līlā also goes on without interruption, rotating like a firebrand throughout the innumerable universe.

After the devotee whose prema has awoken leaves his body, Yogamāyā is so kind to give him birth in the house of a cowherd in the universe where Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā is manifest. In this way the sādhanaka perfects his residence in Vraja in great anurāga in his siddha deha along with the nitya siddhas. Knowing him to have become qualified, the nitya siddha sakhīs will count him amongst their different groups and bless him by giving him the devotional service of the Divine Pair. In this way all the aspirations of the sādhanaka are fulfilled. Hence it is said — 'sakhīgaṇa gaṇanāte, āmāre likhibe tāte, tabahi pūrabo abhilāṣa'. Also in Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya's 'Prārthanā-pada this siddhānta is found —

hari hari! āra kobe emon daśā hobo
kobe vṛṣabhānu pure, āhīrī gopera ghare,
tanayā hoīyā janamibo

"Hari! Hari! When will I attain this condition? When will I be born as a daughter in the house of a cowherd in Vṛṣabhānu's town (Varṣānā)?"

yāvaṭe āmāra kobe, e pāṇi grahana hobe,
vasati koribo kobe tāya
sakhīra parama śreṣṭha, ye hoy tāhāra preṣṭha,

sevana koribo tāra pāya

"When will I be married in the village of Yāvat and when can I live there? When can I serve the feet of the best of sakhīs with everything that is dearest to Her?"

teñho krpāvān hoiyā, rātula caraṇe loiyā,
āmāre koribe samarpaṇa
saphala hoibe daśā, pūribe manera āśā,
sevi duhāra yugala caraṇa

"She will be merciful and take me to her reddish lotus feet, offering me to the lotus feet of the Yugala Kīśora. My condition will become successful and my desires will be fulfilled when I can serve these lotus feet!" (57)

**sakhīnām saṅginī rūpām ātmānām vāsanāmayīm
ājñā sevāparām tat tad rūpālaṅkāra bhūṣitām (58)**
(Sanat Kumāra Samhitā)

"The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sādḥaka should think of himself as an adolescent cowherd girl, a female associate of Śrī Rādhārāṇī's girlfriends, engaged in the service of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa on the order of these sakhīs, and decorated with Śrī Rādhārāṇī's leftover garments and ornaments."

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda's ṭīkā — sakhīnām śrī lalitā-śrī rūpa mañjaryādīnām saṅginī rūpām ātmānām dhyāyed iti śeṣaḥ. kimbhūtām? ājñā sevāparām ājñayā tāsām anumatyā sevā parām śrī rādhā mādḥavayor iti śeṣaḥ. punaḥ kimbhūtām? tat tad rūpālaṅkāra bhūṣitām suprasiddha śrī kṛṣṇa manohara rūpeṇa śrī rādhikā nirmālyālaṅkāreṇa bhūṣitām nirmālya mālya vasanābharaṇās tu dāsya ityukteḥ. punaḥ kimbhūtām? vāsanāmayīm cintāmayīm īkṣate cintāmayam etam īśvaram ityādivat. (58)

Meditation on the siddha deha —

Sudhā kaṇikā vyākhyā — Previously Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya has established mañjarī svarūpa and mañjarī bhāva as the essential principles, and to prove it he is now quoting one verse from the Sanat Kumāra Samhitā Tantra and one verse from Śrīmat Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda's Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu. First he offers evidence from Śrī Sanat Kumāra Samhitā — sakhīnām saṅginī rūpām ātmānām vāsanāmayīm ājñā sevāparām tat tad rūpālaṅkāra bhūṣitām: "The rāgānugā sādḥaka must meditate on himself as a female associate of sakhīs like Śrī Lalitā, Viśākhā or Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī, who is dedicated to the service of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava on their order, and whose own body, consisting of spiritual aspirations, is decorated by Śrī Rādhikā's (leftover) garlands, dresses and ornaments."

Apart from following Śrī Lalitā, Viśākhā, Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī etc., the sādḥaka also meditates on himself as a dedicated maidservant, engaged in loving devotional service according to the Guru-given siddha praṇālī, following his/her own guru mañjarī. Thus he meditates on himself as a submissive maidservant or priya narma sakhī who follows Śrī Lalitā, Rūpa Mañjarī and so, and renders each and every loving service to Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava on the order of his Śrī Guru Mañjarī.

There is conforming evidence for this in Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya's own words —
guru rūpā sakhī vāme,
tribhaṅga bhaṅgima ṭhāme,
cāmarera bātāsa koribo etc.
(Prārthanā)

"Standing on the left side of my Guru rūpa sakhī I will fan Them, standing in a threefold bending form."

He who teaches rāgānugā bhajana by giving initiation into śrī kṛṣṇa mantra is a guru rūpa sakhī in Vraja-līlā. Though in Vraja-līlā Śrī Gurudeva is a superior sakhī he must be considered as the embodiment of the Supreme Lord's Grace—in external dealings the sādḥaka should never deal with him in a fraternal manner, for this is opposed to the teachings of the sādhus and the scriptures.

Before this verse sakhīnām saṅginī rūpām another verse can be found in Śrī Sanat Kumāra Samhitā — ātmānam cintayet tatra tāsām madhye manoramām. rūpa yauvana sampannām kiśorīm pramadākṛtim - "The sādḥaka should meditate on himself as a captivating beautiful adolescent girl amongst Śrī Kṛṣṇa's gopī-consorts and their girlfriends."

The word cintayet in this verse means to see oneself (the soul) or identify oneself as a girl who looks and feels like one of the nitya siddha sakhīs (the way in which it was revealed by Śrī Gurudeva in the siddha praṇālī or ekādaśa bhāva). In other words, to firmly identify oneself as: "I am this body which is endowed with such-and-such a form and mood." When the sādḥaka can establish such a firm self esteem he may consider himself to approach perfection (siddhi); such is the principle established by Śrī Jīva Gosvāmīpāda—astu tāvad bhajana prayāsaḥ kevala tādṛśatvābhimanānenāpi siddhir bhavatīti "Let alone performing bhajana with full spiritual self esteem, siddhi is attained simply by considering oneself to belong to the Supreme Lord."

Ṭhe rāgānugā bhajana of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas is a wonderfully powerful spiritual psychology.

Psychologists say that of all human powers the powers of thought, that are self-manifest within the brain, are the most powerful ones, since through research we can know that anything rising and falling, manufactured and destroyed, preached and dissipated is sitting on the golden throne of our thoughts. This is caused by our customary worship of this power. Its nature is independent; therefore, it is not bound to any fixed place. Its unchecked course pervades all places, both on earth and in the firmament. The results of this power are indestructable, and those who keep this power within the brain will keep it also after their destruction. Just as the sky within a jug is not destroyed after the jug is destroyed, but merges within the firmament, similarly this great power is not destroyed when the human body is destroyed. Even after this the acting power rules over the next human mind. Just as the book or musical composition of a great author or musician does not heed facts like birth or death and continues to increase the delight of society or attains the status of a mental bouquet of love.

If the mundane mental faculties of mankind have such power, then the human brain can certainly not conceive of the power of spiritual psychology or the fixed meditation on God of the sādḥaka, that becomes ever-so-more powerful with the aid of the power of devotion.

Actually, by thinking of his siddha deha and being situated in identification with his svarūpa, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sādḥaka becomes fixed in meditation on his mental service of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava with the aid of thought-power endowed with the like-minded grace-power of the wise men of yore. Thus there is no doubt at all that they will very swiftly attain absorption in bhāva and reach the kingdom of perfection. This is the utmost manifestation of spiritual psychology and the very sweet spiritual flavours of Godhead within the soul of the sādḥaka.

In connection with the meditation of the sādḥaka on the siddha deha, it is to be particularly known that the sādḥaka must mainly prepare his heart by meditating on gopī bhāva, since gopī bhāva is the practice of rāgānugā bhakti. Thus it is not sufficient just to meditate on oneself in the form of a gopī; the siddha deha is nourished by thinking of oneself in the form of a gopī and adopting the feelings of a gopī. It is advised to meditate on the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa while adopting the feelings of a gopī — ataeva gopībhāva kori aṅgikāra; rātri dina cinte rādhā-kṛṣṇera vihāra.

siddha deha cinti kore tāhāi sevana;
gopībhāve pāy rādhā-kṛṣṇera caraṇa
(C.C.)

"Therefore do accept the feelings of a gopī and think of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's enjoyments day and night. Serve them with a mentally conceived siddha deha. When you adopt the feelings of a gopī you will attain the lotus feet of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa."

Being absorbed in mañjarī bhāva, which is the highest stage of gopī bhāva, the sādḥaka who aspires for loving devotional service will constantly think that he is a female associate of Śrī Lalitā, Viśākhā and Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī and that he is a maidservant dedicated to the service of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava according to their orders, adorned with Śrī Rādhā's leftover ornaments, her heart consisting of the determination to engage in the loving devotional service of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava and her body consisting of the ingredients of the flavours of Their service. (58)

**kṛṣṇaṁ smaran janam cāsyā preṣṭhaṁ nija samīhitam
tat tat kathā rataś cāsau kuryād vāsaṁ vraje sadā (59)
(Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu)**

"Remembering Kṛṣṇa and his favorite beloved eternal associate of Kṛṣṇa, the practitioner should always reside in Vraja, greatly attached to conversing about them."

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda's tīkā — kṛṣṇaṁ smarann iti. smaraṇasyātra rāgānugāyām mukhyatvaṁ rāgasya manodharmatvāt. śreṣṭhaṁ nija bhāvocita līlā vilāsinam kṛṣṇaṁ vṛndāvanādhīśvaram. asya kṛṣṇasya janam ca kīdrśam nija samīhitam svābhilaṣaṇīyam śrī vṛndāvaneśvarī-lalitā-viśākhā-rūpa mañjaryādikam kṛṣṇasyāpi nija samīhitatve'pi taj janasya ujjvala bhāvaika niṣṭhatvāt nija samīhitatvādhikyam. vraje vāsam iti asāmarthyē manasāpi sādḥaka śarīreṇa vāsam kuryāt. siddha śarīreṇa vāsa tu uttara ślokaṛthaḥ prāpta eva.

Expertise in rāgānugā bhakti —

Sudhā kaṇikā vyākhyā — Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya backs up his own words by citing the example of this śloka from Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu (1.2.294), written by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, the mūlācārya (founding teacher) of the Gauḍīya Sampradāya, who is the

incarnation of Vraja's very Rūpa Mañjarī. First of all he says: *kṛṣṇaṁ smaran janam cāsyā preṣṭham nija samīhitam*—"One should remember the most dear form of Kṛṣṇa (*preṣṭham kṛṣṇam*), the son of Nanda of *kaiśora* age, and the devotees of that particular form of Kṛṣṇa (*asya janam*), who have the same type of desires (for serving Kṛṣṇa) as oneself (*nija-samīhitam*). Remembering such devotees, one should live in Vraja. If possible, one should physically live in *Vṛndāvana*, the place where Kṛṣṇa resided as Nanda's son. If one cannot do that, one should live there mentally."

This means that in *rāgānugā bhajana* the item of *smaraṇa* is predominant, since *rāga* is a mental religion (*dharma*). The very nature (*dharma*) of the mind is *rāga* (attachment, passion), and hence mental worship is the root cause of *rāgānugā bhajana*. Still the external practice of hearing and chanting must not be neglected or given up—this is to be noted specifically. The perfection of allegiance to the Vraja-people cannot be achieved by giving up external practices like hearing and chanting. As much as the external practices like hearing and chanting nourish the internal practice of *smaraṇa*, that much the internal practice also awakens taste for external practices. Since they nourish each other equally, efforts to fix one's mind on *līlā smaraṇa* without taking shelter of external practices will not become fruitful. And again, efforts to perform only external practices without practising *līlā smaraṇa* cannot be called *rāgānugā mārga's bhajana*. Hence both are required.

All those new aspirants who are unable to meditate on their own *siddha dehas* or on Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava's pastimes, but rather find this difficult to do, should initially not be too eager for *līlā smaraṇa*. If they, along with hearing and chanting etc., practise some light and easy *smaraṇa* while hearing and chanting texts like Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya's '*Prārthanā*' and '*Prema Bhakti Candrikā*', Śrīmat Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda's '*Stavamālā*', Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmīpāda's '*Stavāvalī*', Śrīla Kṛṣṇa dāsa Siddha Bābā's '*Prārthanāmṛta Taraṅginī*', which glorify *gopī bhāva* or *rāgānugā bhajana*, and at the same time try to cultivate *mañjarī bhāva* within the heart, the heart will easily become qualified to practise *līlā smaraṇa*. Hence it is said: *tat tad kathā-rataś cāsau* — "Being attached to their topics", in other words, 'Being engaged in hearing and chanting about them.'

Since Śrī Kṛṣṇa and topics concerning Him are non-different, Śrī Kṛṣṇa enters the pathways of the *sādhakas'* ears through the mouths of the *sādhū bhaktas* who converse about Him and thus enters into their hearts, where He removes all dirt in the form of gross or subtle mundane desires, thus making it a tidy place. This is clearly described in Śrīmad Bhāgavata (1.2.21) — *śṛṇvatām sva kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ puṇya śravaṇa kīrtanaḥ hr̥dyantaḥ stho hyabhadraṇi vidhunoti suhṛt satām*.

Finally, the blessed author says: *kuryād vāsaṁ vraje sadā* — "The *rāgānugīya sādhakas* should always live in Vraja." (Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī comments:) *sāmarthyē sati vraje śrīman nanda vraja-vāsa sthāne śrī vṛndāvanādaḥ śārīreṇa vāsaṁ kuryāt tad abhāve manasāpītyarthaḥ* "If possible one must live in Vraja physically, and if that is not possible one must either live there mentally or aspire to live in Vraja physically." In *Bṛhad Gautamīya Tantra* Śrī Kṛṣṇa personally glorifies residence in Vraja —

*idaṁ vṛndāvanam ramyaṁ mama dhāmaiva kevalam;
atra ye paśavaḥ pakṣī mṛgāḥ kīṭā narāmarāḥ
ye vasanti mamādhiṣṇe mṛtā yānti mamālayam*

.....

*pañca yojanam evāsti vanam me deha rūpakam; kālindīyam suṣumnākhyā paramāmṛta-vāhinī
atra devāś ca bhūtāni vartante deha rūpataḥ; sarva devamayaś cāhaṁ na tyajāmi vanam kvacit*

āvirbhāvas tirobhāvo bhaven me'tra yuge yuge;
tejomayam idaṁ ramyam adṛśyaṁ carma cakṣuṣā

"This Vṛndāvana is most charming and is My only abode. All the animals, birds, deer, insects, humans and demigods who reside here will attain My abode when they leave the body. This ten-mile Vṛndāvana is My very body and the spine is formed by Yamunā, the flow of supreme nectar. Here gods and humans live in subtle, extraordinary or spiritual bodies. I am the aggregate of all the demigods and I never leave this abode. I appear and disappear here age after age. This lovely Vṛndāvana is very powerful, as it consists of pure sattva and is invisible to the physical eye." Although it is the manifestation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's transcendental sandhinī śakti or existence potency, out of its own kindness this abode is also visible to the eyes of the sādhakas of this world, so that they are easily able to attain bhakti siddhi. Which fortunate sādhaka will not take shelter of this transcendental abode for the attainment of bhakti siddhi?

By taking shelter of Śrī Vraja-dhāma and engaging in items of devotion like hearing and chanting in the company of like minded rasika bhaktas, in the abovementioned way, and as a result of practising smaraṇa, the basket-like heart of the rāga sādhaka will be cleansed by the fragrant stream of bhakti's grace. Then the mind and intelligence will become fixed and the sādhaka will gradually become deeply attracted to the Lord. In this way the love-scented desires for service are reflected within the heart of the attracted sādhaka while he performs his bhajana. This first colours the heart, which is softened by gusto, then it will awaken the intelligence to give it certainty and then it will make the ego absorbed in svarūpa bhāva, a mood according to one's intrinsic self. Then the sādhaka will perform his bhajana nicely, his mind always planning and desiring service, his intelligence being fixed in spiritual knowledge, his ego identifying itself with the proper mood and personality and his consciousness getting deep roots into bhakti and getting deep transcendental visions. Then the senses will perceive all these divine emotions while continuing to engage in hearing and chanting. As the force of these emotions nourishes the sweetness of hearing and chanting, they automatically turn inwards and, taking shelter of their own intrinsic faculties, gradually enliven and entertain all the inner faculties of mind, intelligence and ego with the attained and experienced feelings. These are the sādhakas' bhajana anubhava (experiences in bhajana). (59)

yugala caraṇe prīti, parama ānanda tathi,
ratī prema-maya parabandhe
kṛṣṇa nāma rādhā-nāma, upāya koro rasa dhāma,
caraṇe poḍiyā parānande (60)

"Love for the lotus feet of the Divine Couple is a most blissful thing. Become lovingly attached to the love-filled topics narrated by the ācāryas who know Śrī Kṛṣṇa-bhakti rasa, and take to the holy names of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, that are the abode of rasa, falling at Their feet in topmost ecstasy!"

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda's ṭīkā — parabandhe — prabandhe, śrī kṛṣṇa-bhakti rasa vijñā bhakta jana viracita premamaya kathāyām mama ratir bhavatu. caraṇe rādhā mādhavayor iti śeṣaḥ — "May I be always lovingly attached to the loving topics about Śrī Kṛṣṇa bhakti rasa composed by the devotees who are realised in this. caraṇa stands for Rādhā-Mādhava's lotus feet."

Confidential bhajana :

Sudhā-kanikā vyākhyā — In this tripadī Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura Mahāśaya reveals some confidential items of the bhajana practised by the rāgānugīya sādhakas through his own prayers. First of all he says: yugala caraṇe prīti, parama ānanda tathī — "May my love dwell in the lotus feet of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava", tathī meaning "there, or in this love, I will attain paramount bliss."

In the Taittirīya Upaniṣad it is said 'saiśānandasya mīmāṃsa bhavati' - The bliss of Hiranyagarbha, the progenitor, and others, is a hundred times greater than human happiness. Greater than that is again the bliss of the non-personal brahman — The śloka: yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha; ānandaṁ brahmaṇo vidvan na vibheti kutaścana shows how special and unlimited that bliss is.

After that the words ko hyevanyāt kaḥ prāṇyād yad eva ākāśa ānando na syāt show the bliss of the all-pervading principle of brahman. The Upaniṣadic words ānandāddhyeva khalvimāni bhūtāni jāyante proclaims the joyful message of universal bliss — "The whole universe attains birth from bliss, it is remaining in bliss and it is destroyed in bliss." From this it is learned that nothing can exist in this world outside of bliss. He who is ānanda rūpam amṛtam, He who is raso vai saḥ, He who is sarveśāṁ bhūtānāṁ madhu, that blissful, nectarean, flavourful and honey-filled Lord has created a world in which misery can never exist. Thus the happiness and distress that follows the course of the living entities' lives, are nothing else but the culmination of the karmik reactions of the conditioned souls, who are actually vessels of spiritual light. Intrinsically the living entity is a particle of spiritual bliss, but because he has been averse to the Lord since beginningless time his heart is contaminated, and because he is devoid of spiritual knowledge he remains seated within material bodies and continues to suffer the beginningless pangs of material life. On the day that the conditioned soul turns inwards, and develops a service-attitude towards the Lord by the grace of a great saint, experiencing the Lord as dearer than the dearest in his heart of hearts, on that day his awareness of his intrinsic nature awakens within his heart and his eternally perfect prema awakens, so that he becomes immersed in an ocean of transcendental bliss, forever relishing the sweetness of the all-blissful and all-delicious Lord. Within the relish of the Lord's sweetness the relish of the very embodiment of sweetness, the Original Personality of Godhead Bhagavān Vrajendranandana (Kṛṣṇa) is the greatest of all, and then again the ocean of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sweetness increases when He is in the company of Śrī Rādhārāṇī, hence there can be no comparison anywhere to the paramount bliss attained by those who are dedicated to loving the lotus feet of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava. Hence the blessed author has said: "yugala caraṇa prīti, parama ānanda tathī."

Then the blessed author said: rati premamaya parabandhe, meaning: "May I be lovingly attached to the books that were lovingly made by the Mahājanas of my own sampradāya (tradition), who are great knowers of Śrī Kṛṣṇa-bhakti rasa." Books like Śrīpāda Rūpa and Raghunātha's Stavamālā and Stavāvalī and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja's Govinda Līlāmṛta are most relishable for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sādhakas practising mañjarī bhāva, and these books greatly enhance their own bhāva. Each syllable of these books of the Mahājanas is premamaya, filled with prema - premamaya akṣara yāhāra. Each syllable of the scriptures composed by the Mahājanas is permeated by the rasa of their realisations, therefore they are greatly capable of cleansing the heart of all impurities and bestowing prema bhakti. This Prema Bhakti Candrikā of Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya is one of them. In connection with this I am mentioning an event that really took place: Once a high ranking government official (Judge) stayed in Ambikā Kālnā in West Bengal for a few days to perform some duties. At that time Siddha Śrī Bhagavān dās Bābājī Mahārāja was manifest in this world. Having heard about Siddha Bābā's glories from the local residents the judge once went to see him. When

Siddha Bābā saw him coming he asked him why he had come, and the gentleman said: "Bābā! Tell me how prema bhakti can be achieved!"

Siddha Bābā immediately said: "prema bhakti can be purchased for 2 ānās (a very small amount of money in colonial India, like 5 paisā)!" When the gentleman heard these words of Siddha Bābā he was a little taken aback and said: "Bābā! Why are you joking with me?"

Siddha Bābā replied with determination: "It's not a joke; for 2 ānās you can buy Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura Mahāśaya's Prema Bhakti Candrikā in Calcutta's Baṭa-talā. Always read this and you will attain prema bhakti."

Following Siddha Bābā's advice the gentleman purchased a copy of Prema Bhakti Candrikā and began to study it regularly. By the force of mahad ājñā (the order received from a saint) and because of constantly serving (reciting) the premamaya akṣara (love-filled syllables) of Prema Bhakti Candrikā he lost his taste for his job. He promptly gave up his job and began to sit at home, reciting Prema Bhakti Candrikā with great attachment as a rule. Because he gave up his job he immediately became uninteresting to his relatives and family members. He had no more liking for the enjoyments in his home, and one day he left home and began to wander around here and there like one indifferent. Wearing torn up dirty clothes and filling up his belly with foodstuffs attained by begging alms, he continued constantly reciting Prema Bhakti Candrikā, lovingly offering everything to Śrī Hari in his heart. Because he was at first such a high official and he had suddenly changed so radically the wordly people had begun to consider him crazy. In this way quite some time passed.

One day all the great paṇḍitas of India were invited to a meeting in the Vibudha-jananī assembly in Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma. The aforementioned gentleman tried to enter into the assembly at its very outset, but the doorkeeper kicked him away, considering him crazy. After a short while he tried to enter the assembly again, and was again kicked away by the gatekeeper. When he tried to enter the assembly for the third time and the gatekeeper began to kick him for the third time, the person who has accepted the seat of the leader of the assembly, Mahā-mahopādhyāya Paṇḍita Śrī-yukta Ajita Nyāya-ratna Mahāśaya, stopped the gatekeeper and asked the gentleman to enter into the assembly, asking him: "Why do you enter into this assembly, despite the fact that you're being kicked away time and again? Do you have any business here?" When Nyāya-ratna inquired thus, the newcomer openly told him everything - how he was always reading Prema Bhakti Candrikā on the order of Siddha Śrī Bhagavān dāsa Bābā and how he had begun to spend his life in a completely detached manner as a result. Finally, he asked if he had not attained the prema bhakti that Siddha Bābā had told him about? When the leader of the assembly, Nyāya-ratna Mahāśaya, heard this, he offered sāṣṭāṅga daṇḍavats (prostrated obeisances with eight limbs of the body) to him.

Standing before him with folded hands he prayed for his grace and declared that this person was blessed with the shower of the pure moonbeams from Prema Bhakti Candrikā (the moonbeams of loving devotion) as a result of reciting Prema Bhakti Candrikā and by the mercy of Siddha Bābā. He announced to all those present that the meeting of the Vibudha-jananī assembly had borne a wonderfully juicy fruit at its very outset. In other words, that ceremony which was held to glorify the process of hearing and chanting the Ārya-śāstras (Vedas) and the teachings of the Mahājanas has now witnessed the exemplary embodiment of the recitation of these great teachings with its own eyes. Thus those who attended the assembly considered themselves blessed and everyone present offered their obeisances to the visitor. Śrīla Bhagavān dāsa Siddha Bābā's disciple, Vṛndāvana Kālidāsa Nivāsī Siddha Śrī-yukta Jagadīśa Bābā gave similar instructions to recite and read Prema Bhakti Candrikā and

Prārthanā to a faithful person; this is described in his hagiography in Śrīla Haridāsa dāsa's 'Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Jīvana'.

Success is guaranteed for those who hear and chant the loving compositions of the Mahājanas whose hearts are absorbed in the flavours of devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmīpāda has written in his phalaśruti (final benediction to the reciter) of Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta - yebā nāhi bujhe keho, śunite śunite seho, ki adbhuta caitanya carita. kṛṣṇe upajibe prīti, jānibe rasera rīti, śunilei hoibe boḍo hita (C.C.) "Even those who cannot understand anything will awaken their dormant love for Kṛṣṇa by continuously hearing these amazing pastimes of Śrī Caitanya. Hearing this is very beneficial, for you will get to know the intricacies of rasa." Therefore, it goes without saying that a sādḥaka who recites and reads these loving compositions with loving attachment will be blessed with the attainment of prema.

After this the blessed author says: kṛṣṇa nāma rādhā nāma, upāy koro rasadhāma, caraṇe poriyā parānande — "Fall at Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, or surrender exclusively to the most blissful yugala caraṇa. Do bhajana by taking the holy name of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, that are the sole abodes of rasa." The main foundation of worshipping the lotus feet of the Lord is surrendering to them. If a mood of surrender does not come to the heart of the devotee, bhagavad bhajan will not take place. The more one surrenders, the more one advances in bhajan. Śrīmad Jīva Gosvāmīpāda has written: asyāścāpūrvatvaṁ tām vinā tadīyatvāsiddhe (Bhakti Sandarbha, Paragraph 237) — "The wonderful thing about surrender is that without surrender tadīyatva (status of belonging to the Lord) cannot reach perfection." When tadīyatva reaches perfection the sādḥaka will always be fearless. The Lord told Śrī Uddhava Mahāśaya — mām ekam eva śaraṇam ātmānaṁ sarva dehinām. yāhi sarvātma-bhāvena mayā syāt hyakutobhayaḥ (Bhāg. 11.12.15) "O Uddhava! Give up everything and surrender to Me, the true Self of all embodied souls, and thus become completely fearless!" The surrendered devotee will not only become fearless through his bhajana sādḥana, he will also become happiest, since he certainly also becomes free from worries — tavāsmīti vadan vācā tathaiva manasā vidan. tat sthānam āśritas tanvā modate śaraṇāgataḥ (Hari Bhakti Vilāsa) "Any surrendered sādḥaka who says: "O Lord! I am Yours!" and cherishes such ideas within the mind also, while physically taking shelter of the Lord's playground, experiences the topmost bliss."

Hence Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says: "By exclusively surrendering to Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava's lotus feet and by most blissfully accepting the holy names of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, that are most relishable abode of rasa, as the best means to attain prema, I will take shelter of the greatest items of bhajana." The holy name is the shelter or the abode of all rasas. Although the holy name of the Lord is naturally sweetest and relishable, the tongue which is contaminated by offences cannot taste this, just as the tongue of someone suffering from jaundice experiences the sweet taste of sugar to be bitter. Only by continuously tasting sugar the patient will be cured from his jaundice and ultimately experience the naturally sweet taste of sugar.

In the same way the tongue of an offender cannot taste the natural sweetness of the holy name of the Lord on his tongue, but when he continues to serve (chant) the holy name the offenses will cease and he will experience the sweetness of the holy name.

Hence Śrīmat Jīva Gosvāmīpāda has written, ataevānanda rūpatvam asya mahad dḥṛdaya sākṣikaṁ yathā śrī vighrahasya "The holy name of the Lord is like the very form of the Lord and the very embodiment of transcendental bliss, this is proven by the experiences of the great souls." In other words, the demoniac non devotees do not feel happy when they see Śrī Kṛṣṇa,

who is the embodiment of sweetness, rather their hearts will light up in hatred and envy. In the same way, the holy name, which is the abode of rasa, cannot be relished by the tongue of an offender at all.

The devotee experiences: kṛṣṇa nāme ye ānanda sindhu āsvādana; brahmānanda tāra āge khātodaka sama (C.C.) "The bliss of the non-personal brahman is just like a little pool in comparison to the relish that lies in the ocean of bliss of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa." Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya yearns for the nāma bhajan of the sweeter-than-sweet holy name of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. About the sweetness of the holy names of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Śrīmat Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has written in his Abhīṣṭa Sūcana stava: rādheti nāma nava sundara sīdhu mugdhaṁ; kṛṣṇeti nāma madhurādbhuta gāḍha dugdham; sarva kṣaṇaṁ surabhi rāga himena ramyaṁ; kṛtvā tad eva piba me rasane kṣudhārtte "O my thirsty tongue! Always drink these two substances — The names rādhā, which is captivating like fresh beautiful nectar, and kṛṣṇa, the name which is very sweet like wonderful condensed milk, and make them wonderful by mixing them with the fragrant ice of anurāga (constant passionate attachment)!" Śrīman Mahāprabhu asked Rāma Rāya: upāsyera madhye kon upāsyā pradhāna? ("What is most adorable?") and Rāma Rāya answered: śreṣṭha upāsyā — yugala rādhā-kṛṣṇa nāma (C.C.) — ("The names of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are most adorable.") Through this tripadī three confidential practices in rāgānugā bhajana are shown — love for Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, attachment to the books written by the Mahājanas who are all deeply realised in the flavours of devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and the nāma saṅkīrtana of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. (60)

**manera smaraṇa prāṇa, madhura madhura dhāma,
yugala vilāsa smṛti sāra
sādhya sādhana ei, iha boi āra nāi,
ei tattva sarva tattva sāra (61)**

"The very life of the mind is smaraṇa, and the sweetest remembrance is the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This is the goal and this is the practice and there is nothing more than this. This truth is the essence of all regulative principles."

**Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda's ṭīkā: vidhinām kartavyopadeśānām sārāḥ.
smartavyaḥ satataṁ viṣṇur vismartavyo na jātūcit; sarva vidhi niṣedha syur etayor eva
kiṅkarāḥ.**

The life force of the mind:

Sudhā kaṇikā vyākhyā— In this tripadī composed by the blessed author the main item of rāgānugā bhakti, namely smaraṇāṅga bhakti, is revealed. First it is said: manera smaraṇa prāṇa. The human mind is the king, or greatest of the senses. Although it is silent it experiences all the objects the senses contact. The senses act according to its orders like slaves. Form, sound, taste, smell and touch — these five sense objects are relished or experienced by our eyes, ears, tongue, nose and skin respectively, and all of them are centered around the mind.

If at present we do not see an object which we may have seen in the past, we can say what it is, because its picture is marked in our minds. When we see the flash of lightning we dread the rolling of the thunder, for we remember that this sound is coming along with the lightning. We can tell how delicious the food is that we have enjoyed before, even if we do not savour it now, for we can recollect its relish. When we see a beautiful flower we can say how it smells, for that fragrance was so sweet to us before. The little speechless child places its hand only

once into the fire, and never again. Rather when he sees fire he backs away, for he remembers that its touch will burn him and hurt him. Although we use or accept gross matters through our gross senses, we will not experience anything if our minds are not at it. In this way the mind, which is the center of all the senses, may be incorporeal, it is able to give us all kinds of experiences.

From beginningless time the human mind has been turned away from God and has become so polluted by thinking of mundane objects that it constantly billows on high and low waves of thoughts of small and large sense enjoyments, just as high and low waves billow on the ocean. Our intelligence cannot accept all thoughts; only particular thoughts are captured by the intelligence. What to speak of the waking state, even in a state of slumber the waves of sensual impressions billow on and this state we thus call *svapna* or dream. Only when the state of deep sleep enters the waves of thoughts stop. The practising devotee performs all his plays with this mind, for when the mind is not concentrated *bhajana* may proceed in a mechanical way for a long time, but the fruit of *bhajana*, namely *prema* will not be yielded. Through the practice of *bhajana*, which is attained by the grace of the Lord and His devotees, the mind, which is muddled by thoughts of sensual desires, is purified and gives up its experiences of sensual thoughts that are unrelated to Kṛṣṇa. Constant remembrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is called pure or transcendental devotion by the *Bhāgavata*.

mad guṇa śruti mātrena mayi sarva guhāśaye;
manogatir avichinnā yathā gaṅgāmbhaso'mbudhau
lakṣaṇaṁ bhakti yogasya nirguṇasya hyudāhṛtam
ahaitukyavavahitā yā bhaktiḥ puruṣottame (Bhāg.3.29.11-12)

Śrī Kapiladeva told His own mother Devahūtī— "O mother! The uninterrupted flow of the mind-stream towards Me, who is reclining in the cave of everyone's heart, like that of the waters of the Gaṅgā towards the ocean, at the mere mention of My attributes, combined with causeless and ceaseless love for Me, the Supreme Person, is cited as the distinguishing characteristic of transcendental *bhakti yoga*."

Hence Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says: "Remembrance of God is called the life force the practising devotee's mind." The mind which does not remember God is lifeless like a corpse without its five life-airs. Just as a lifeless corpse serves as free meal for the jackals and dogs, similarly the mind which is devoid of remembering God is constantly bitten by its enemies like lust and greed. Just as the jackals and dogs flee fearfully from a living body, similarly the enemies like lust flee far away from the mind which is alive and vibrant through remembrance of Hari. Therefore, each devotee should take shelter of the item of recollection to be rescued from the enemies like lust and to attain the relish of *rasa* in the ecstasy of *bhajana*. Any mental connection with the Lord is called *smaraṇa*. Śrīmat Jīva Gosvāmīpāda has mentioned five successive stages of the item of recollection — *smaraṇa*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, *dhruvānusmṛti* and *samādhi*. Slight remembrance of the Lord's form, attributes and pastimes is called *smaraṇa*, withdrawing the mind from all other sensual thoughts and keeping it generally on the Lord's pastimes etc. is called *dhāraṇā*, detailed thinking of the Lord's form etc. is called *dhyāna*, remembering the Lord's form, attributes and pastimes continuously like a stream of nectar is called *dhruvānusmṛti* and perception in sheer meditation is called *samādhi*. This *samādhi* is not the same undistinguished *samādhi* as is achieved through the practices of *jñāna*, *yoga* etc. Here *smaraṇa* has become very deep and causes a perception of the Lord's pastimes etc. as if they are vividly experienced.

The essence of this practice of smaraṇa is the pastimes of the Divine Pair, hence it is said — yugala vilāsa smṛti sāra.

There are four kinds of smaraṇa— remembering the Lord's names, remembering His form, remembering His attributes and remembering His pastimes with His associates. Of them, remembering the pastimes is the greatest, for recollection of the Lord's pastimes includes the remembrance of His names, forms and attributes.

Then again, of recollecting any kind of pastime of the Lord the recollection of the pastimes of Vrajendra-nandana, the embodiment of sweetness, is the best, for His pastimes are the sweetest. Then again of all His different pastimes, like His childhood or early youth-pastimes, the greatest pastimes of Kṛṣṇa to remember are His romantic adolescent pastimes with Śrī Rādhārāṇī.

Therefore, the pastimes of the Divine Pair are the essence of all meditations, and that includes Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's meetings with Their girlfriends, picking flowers, stealing Kṛṣṇa's flute, play in the forest, drinking honey-wine, intimate pastimes, watersports, dice game and the Rāsa pastimes. In the Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya a manual can be seen of recollection of the eight fold daily pastimes of Śrī Gaurāṅga along with Śrī-Rādhā-Mādhava or svārasikī līlā and mantramayī or yogapīṭha milana līlā, which is the greatest item of smaraṇāṅga bhajana.

However, the practitioner who is fixed in such meditations should constantly beware that during his recollections the relish of the sweetness of the pastimes, forms and attributes of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava and Their girlfriends should be taken to heart as madhura madhura dhāma — the ever-so-sweet abode. The root target of his practice must be the attainment of the sweetness of his chosen deity.

If the practitioner, especially in rāga bhakti, which has sacred greed at its roots, simply practises smaraṇa in different regulated ways without relishing any of the sweetness of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava's forms and attributes, then how can that be really considered rāga bhakti? On the other hand, if the relish of sweet forms etc. is attained, then līlā smaraṇa is considered accomplished, even if the succession of memorable events is incomplete.

In the second part of his 'Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Jīvana', Śrīla Haridās dāśjī has written about the life of Siddha Śrīla Kṛṣṇa dāsa Bābājī, the resident of Govardhana — "Those who learned the science of bhajana from Siddha Bābā would assemble with him every night and Siddha Bābā would hear how each person was doing bhajana and correct mistakes. One day a Vaiṣṇava saint was there who did not say anything but only wept. To encourage and console him Siddha Bābā asked him why he was weeping, and the Vaiṣṇava replied: "Today I could not do any bhajana! In the morning I was putting an ornament on Prāṇeśvarī's right hand, but I became so absorbed in the beauty of Her hand that I could not withdraw my mind from that image the rest of the day!" To encourage him Siddha Bābā declared: "Your bhajana is accomplished!"

In some editions of this book we see the reading manera smaraṇa prāṇa, madhura madhura nāma. This means that since the life force of the mind is smaraṇa, the mind must take shelter of the ever-so-sweet holy name of the Lord, for the item of smaraṇa depends on a pure consciousness, as Śrīmat Jīva Gosvāmīpāda has written: smaranam tu śuddhāntaḥ karaṇa tāmapekṣate (Bhakti Sandarbha—276) - The impure mind which is polluted by sensual cravings can not concentrate itself, and can therefore not accomplish the bhajana-item of

smaraṇa. However, nāma kīrtana does not depend on a pure consciousness; even an impure consciousness does not obstruct the practice of nāma kīrtana. When the heart is cleansed by nāma saṅkīrtana the bhajana-item of smaraṇa is nicely accomplished.

One may ask here, then if that is so let us do nāma saṅkīrtana until the consciousness is purified, but what is the use still of nama kīrtana when the mind is concentrated and smaraṇa is conducted with a pure heart? In this regard Śrīmat Sanātana Gosvāmīpāda has explained in Śrī Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta that through nāma saṅkīrtana the relish of smaraṇa is nourished and through smaraṇa or meditation the relish of the holy name is also nourished. Since they nourish each other there can be no question of doing only the item of smaraṇa without practising nāma kīrtana. Śrīmat Jīva Gosvāmīpāda has written: śuddhāntaḥ karaṇaś cet nāma kīrtanāparityāgena smaraṇaṁ kuryāt (Bhakti Sandarbha—275) "The practitioner performs nāma saṅkīrtan along with smaraṇa with a pure consciousness."

After this the blessed author says: sādhya sādhana ei, ihā boi āra nāi, ei tattva sarva vidhi sāra— To take shelter of a means or practice to attain a certain goal is called sādhana and the goal that is to be attained through that practice is called sādhya. In the schools of jñāna and yoga the means and the goal are different things, but in bhakti the means equals the goal. This is the great difference between bhakti sādhana and yoga or jñāna sādhana. sādhana bhakti, bhāva bhakti and prema bhakti are different sequential, yet integral stages of each other. What is unripe during sādhana is ripe in the stage of siddhi. Therefore, those who are able to become absorbed in līlā smaraṇa during their sādhana will be blessed with the direct attainment of the service they meditated on at the achievement of siddhi. Therefore, it is not different from the goal of practice — ihā boi āra nāi. This is the essence of all the instructions the scriptures give the living beings on their duties — ei tattva sarva vidhi sāra. In Śrī Padma Purāṇa it is said: smartavyaḥ satataṁ viṣṇur vismartavyo na jātūcit; sarva vidhi niṣedha syur etayor eva kiṅkaraḥ” - Always remember Lord Viṣṇu and never forget Him — all the scriptural injunctions and prohibitions are subservient to this one rule and this one prohibition."

Hence it is said: Just as a person who is robbed from all his belongings by a robber loudly weeps, a devotee should loudly weep for each moment which is lost not thinking of Śrī Hari." ekasminn apyatikrānte muhūrte dhyāna varjito dasyubhir mūṣitenaiva yuktam ākranditum bhr̥ṣam (Garuḍa Purāṇa) (61)