

The
SIX GOSWAMIS
of **VRINDAVAN**



STEVEN ROSEN

*Foreword by Norvin J. Hein,
Professor Emeritus of Comparative Religion,
Yale University*

New Revised Edition

The

**SIX GOSWAMIS
OF VRINDAVAN**

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First FOLK Books edition published in 1990.
Revised Edition published in 1991 in conjunction with Bhaktivedanta Book Trust Ltd., P.O. Box 324, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 1NB, U. K. (Copies of this book and general catalog available from this address).

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Rosen, Steven, 1955-
Six Goswamis of Vrindavan
1. Hinduism; biography; philosophy. I. Title.

Library of Congress Number 89-83341

ISBN 0-9619763-2-2

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
BPCC Hazell Books
Aylesbury, Bucks, England
Member of BPCC Ltd.

For more information on this subject contact Satyaraja Dasa: c/o FOLK BOOKS, P.O. Box 400716, Brooklyn, New York, 11240-0716.

Preface to the Revised Edition

When I first compiled this work on the lives of the Six Goswamis, I hardly considered the possibility that it would ever be reprinted. It is, after all, an obscure subject, and that with limited market appeal. Or so I thought. The reality, however, is quite the opposite—there is actually a wide audience, and the initial printing of the book was sold within one year. Not only were the books purchased by devotees of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), who are naturally interested in the subject, but the books were also bought by libraries, bookstores, academic institutions, and by spiritual seekers of all denominations.

Amita Das, who is the Director of the Bhaktivedanta Booktrust, Ltd., in England, was enthusiastic to reprint the book, primarily because of the book's popularity and his strong belief in its general importance. And so, upon his request, I revised and updated it for a new edition. A recent trip to India

allowed me to gather additional information about the Six Goswamis and their work. This, along with a new cover design and a handy pocket-size format, will hopefully give readers of the First Edition an added impetus to look through this new printing.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Shrimati Prema-bhakti-marg Dasi, too, for it was she who first suggested that I write a book on the life and times of the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan. She pointed out that a useful and thorough book about the Six Goswamis would be a natural sequel to my prior book, *India's Spiritual Renaissance: The Life and Times of Lord Chaitanya*, since the Goswamis were Shri Chaitanya's immediate followers.

I must also thank Ramadas and Dhriti, two dear friends, for their beautiful painting that is used on the cover. Shri Ram Prabhu, of the International Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, gave his written permission to use this work for my initial volume on the Six Goswamis. Several other devotees, including Lakshmi-nrsinghadev Prabhu, Lochanananda Prabhu, Mrigendra Prabhu, Rupavilas Prabhu and Vaiyasaki Prabhu have all given valuable suggestions and in some cases have carefully edited my initial manuscript. I have also benefitted from the work of Gadadhar Pran Prabhu, and I am indebted to the fruits of his research.

Inspiration and encouragement was also given by His Holiness Mangal Maharaj, of the Shree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, who went over the earlier printing of this book and gave valuable suggestions for improvement. I am also indebted to Mahanidhi Swami, who lives at Jiva Goswami's Radha Damodar Temple, in Vrindavan, for his encouragement. And, lest I forget those who are closest to me, I must give special thanks to my dear friend Dhanurdhar Swami,

by designing the entire package. She is unquestionably my best friend and most valuable resource.

Special note from the author: It may seem unlikely that a *godasa*, or “a servant of the senses,” would write a book about a *goswami*, or “a master of the senses.” A *godasa* simply has no taste for anything beyond the sensual. His taste revolves around materialistic life, whereas a *goswami's* concerns are spiritual.

Although I am unquestionably a *godasa*, I hope that the present work will not reflect the typical *godasa* perspective. This volume will only be saved from such a pitfall by the guidance of a genuine Goswami. It is solely by the mercy of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, a Goswami *par excellence*, that I am able to experience a slight taste for the spiritual activities of the Goswamis. I hope I can adequately convey the wonderful richness of that taste to my readers.

Invocation

Prayers To The Six Goswamis By Shrinivas Acharya

I offer my respectful obeisances to the Six Goswamis, namely Shri Rupa Goswami, Shri Sanatan Goswami, Shri Raghunath Bhatta Goswami, Shri Raghunath Das Goswami, Shri Jiva Goswami, and Shri Gopal Bhatta Goswami, who are always engaged in chanting the holy name of Krishna and dancing. They are just like the ocean of love of God, and they are popular both with the gentle and the ruffians, because they are not envious of anyone. Whatever they do, they are all-pleasing to everyone,

who kindly asked the exalted Narayana Maharaj of Mathura several esoteric questions on my behalf. The answers to these questions served to enrich the revised edition of this work. To all of these great souls, I owe a great deal of thanks. Special thanks must also go to Bhakta Mark Oppenheimer and Bhakta Gerald Surya for aiding me in my research.

Dr. Joseph T. O'Connell, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at St. Michael's College (University of Toronto), has also shared his insights and has supported the project from its inception. To ensure the work's thoroughness, he firmly suggested that I refer to B.B. Majumdar's classic Bengali work *Shri-Chaitanya-Chariter Upadan* (Calcutta University Press, reprint, 1959) and Naresh Chandra Jana's *Brindabaner Choi Gosvami* (Calcutta University Press, 1970). Although I do not quote from Majumdar's work directly, I have gained much from its scholarly content. Jana's book was difficult to procure, and I am thus indebted to Donna Marie Wulff, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Brown University, who so kindly allowed me the use of her personal copy.

Many other dear friends and academics have assisted me in primary source research, especially in cases where available works existed only in Sanskrit or Bengali. Most helpful in this area were Per Sinclair, Paul ("Panditji") Sherbow, and Mahayogi Swami. Neal Delmonico and Guy Beck also shared their knowledge of these languages.

I am most of all indebted to my tireless helpmate, Vrinda-devi, who has shown patience and understanding during this labor of love—my long hours of writing. Moreover, she directly contributed to this volume my making editorial comments and

and they are fully blessed by Lord Chaitanya. Thus they are engaged in various missionary activities meant to deliver all the conditioned souls in the material universe.

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Six Goswamis, who are expert in scrutinizingly studying all the revealed scriptures with the aim of establishing eternal religious principles for the benefit of all the human beings. Thus they are honored all over the three worlds, and they are worth taking shelter of because they are absorbed in the mood of the gopis and are engaged in the transcendental loving service of Radha and Krishna.

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Six Goswamis, who are very much enriched in understanding of Lord Chaitanya and who are thus expert in narrating His transcendental qualities. They can purify all conditioned souls from reactions of their sinful activities by pouring upon them loving transcendental songs about Govinda. As such, they are very expert in increasing the limits of the ocean of transcendental bliss, and they are the saviors of the living entities from the devouring mouths of liberation.

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Six Goswamis, who kicked off all association of aristocracy as insignificant. In order to deliver the poor conditioned souls, they accepted loincloths and treated themselves as mendicants, and yet they are always merged in the ecstatic ocean of the gopis' love for Krishna and bathe always and repeatedly in the waves of that ocean.

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Six Goswamis, who were always engaged in worshipping Shri Shri Radha-Krishna in the transcendental land of Vrindavan, where there are beautiful trees full of fruits and flowers which have under their roots all valuable jewels. The Goswamis are perfectly competent to bestow upon the living entities the greatest boon of the goal of life.

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Six Goswamis, who were engaged in chanting the holy names of the Lord and bowing down in a scheduled measurement. In this way they utilized their valuable lives, and in executing these devotional activities they conquered over eating and sleeping and were always meek and humble, enchanted by remembering the transcendental qualities of the Lord.

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Six Goswamis, who were sometimes on the bank of the Radha-kund lake or the shores of the Yamuna and sometimes at Vamsivata. There they appeared just like madmen in the full ecstasy of love for Krishna, exhibiting different transcendental symptoms in their bodies, and they were merged in the ecstasy of Krishna consciousness.

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Six Goswamis, who were chanting very loudly everywhere in Vrindavan, shouting, "Queen of Vrindavan, Radharani! O Lalita! O Son of Nanda Maharaj! Where are you all now? Are you just on the hill of Govardhan, or are you under the trees on the bank of the Yamuna? Where are you?" These were their very exalted moods in executing Krishna consciousness.

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Foreword

By Norvin Hein,
Professor Emeritus of Comparative Religion,
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In the custom of the academic community it is not unusual for an older scholar who knows a young author's manuscript to write a foreword for it when the work is about to appear in print. The practice is a useful one. Such introductions when written conscientiously provide for the reading public some of the service of a review at a stage in publication when reviews of a book are not yet available. Teachers and researchers who see a new title on a publisher's list or see the work on a bookseller's table often feel some immediate interest in the book, and find themselves under uncomfortable pressure to decide at once what bearing it may have upon his teaching responsibilities, personal researches, or other professional interests. To make a personal judgment of a book's relevance requires time and intense attention that is seldom immediately available. Pressed read-

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ers—and, indeed, who in the academic world is not pressed?—need and appreciate brief descriptions of the scope of a young scholar's work and of the improvements he has made upon the predecessors in the field of his investigation. It was with the intention of writing this familiar kind of foreword that I agreed to read this manuscript.

In perusing the actual text, however, it became clear that this history of the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan requires a new kind of introduction. What we have here is not the usual kind of academic monograph. Its account of the patrological figures who transformed Chaitanya's following into a movement is purposeful, lucid and effective writing but the author's purposes are not those of academia. Mr. Rosen does not scrutinize the old records and their orthodox interpretation in order to test and revise the traditional understanding of the lives and teachings of the intellectual founders of Bengal Vaishnavism. He glories in describing the work of Jiva, Rupa and Sanatan Goswami, Raghunath and Gopal Bhatta and Raghunath Das just as it was understood and presented by his own *guru* Shri Prabhupada Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta and his teacher's teachers before him. The notion of "improving" upon their understanding was far from Mr. Rosen's mind. He has accorded to that line of *gurus* the unconditionally submissive listening that Chaitanyite preceptors expect of all their disciples. What he has given to his readers here is a scrupulous presentation of the orthodox Chaitanyite understanding of the foundational century of this dynamic Vaishnava movement. His book bears the *imprimatur*, so to speak, of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. It

is an authentic piece of its educational and promotional literature.

Academics do not usually think it to be part of their duty to take professional notice of the appearance of confessional literature of this sort. They have their own unconditional obligation, another *dharma* in which they too must not fail. It is their duty to examine objectively, and without submission to any human authority, all orthodox accounts of events in the history of religions. Thus scholars and orthodox literati are pitted against each other. The tension between ecclesiastical authority and scholar manifests itself to some degree in all religions. Even those faiths that legitimize and formally accept the role of scholars have some trouble with them—inevitably, because all sects and religious movements have and must have their own internal understandings of the historical circumstances in which their religion arose and grew. They inculcate these views of their history when training their young and they present their message to the world in terms of these traditional accounts. In all religions the revisionary work of scholars is at least disconcerting to the main line of believers. There are only truces in the war between them.

A detached observer can perceive, however, that this polarization of roles among the learned involves a dialectical opposition rather than the relationship between eternal enemies. Scholar and orthodox are intimate participants in a process in which fruitful resolutions of this tension constantly occur. Ultimately, the contenders need each other. We even dare to say that scholars need the orthodox and do well to give thoughtful attention to their work. They need the histories and clear statements of approved doc-

trine that sectarian literati produce. For the scholarly historians of religious movements they are indispensable definers of the identity of the groups whose history the scholars trace. The writings of the learned orthodox comprise the usual starting point of scholars. The orthodox are the persons most attentive to a scholar's work, a major readership for his writings and as such, often, they are his bread and butter. They are for him a natural community of professional conversation, emotionally supportive to him however uneasy his citizenship at times may be.

Likewise the contributions of scholars are needed even by traditionalistic sects to which they are most irritating. The irksome scholar is at the same time a giver of new life. Sects survive social exigencies and continue their existence through successive overturns in culture only if they are able to review their histories and discover new meanings that are relevant to the problems of the new age. Sects that can solve only the problems of the past and can apply only the solutions of the past, become fossil religions. Happy is the faith that has scholars of its own, but even the criticism of external scholarship has often produced the regeneration in a faith. Scholar and priest are a bickering pair but they illustrate the biblical proverb that friend sharpens friend as iron sharpens iron. In restive but effective combination they lead religious movements down paths of vigorous life, prospering each other and the faiths that can accommodate both. Scholars should not ignore the publications of the orthodox. They need sincere conversation with those who write them.

Other aspects of the importance of books like the one at hand are perceived best by scholars who

confess a faith themselves. They are capable of deep concern about the quality of communication between the faiths of the modern world. Steven Rosen is a firm adherent of the Hindu (Vaishnava) faith as taught by Gaudiya teachers belonging to the line of Chaitanya. I myself am not only a scholar, I trust, but also a Christian. Between this Hindu tradition and Christianity there are dramatic differences and some of them are important. But I should like to say to those of my own religious community that many of them would profit by familiarity with Mr. Rosen's work. His Bengal Vaishnavism and Christianity have common cause in several struggles that are critical for both. Both contend with that perennial world-faith called materialism that finds the meaning of life in pleasure and wealth. Also, in the face of great opposition within their respective cultures, both Chaitanyite and Christian maintain that Highest Reality is not to be described as "It," but as a Personal Being characterized by love and intelligence and concern for the welfare of humanity. Both faiths firmly believe that the Supreme Person can be and has manifested to the world in human form. The intellectuals of orthodox Chaitanyaism have defended these convictions tenaciously in sophisticated theological writings that would stimulate the thinking of Christians who study them. Mr. Rosen outlines this elaborate Chaitanyite doctrine but his stress is on the emotional content of this Hindu theism. His pictures of the devotional attitudes and practices of the Bengal Vaishnava saints enable one to understand what the crucial problems of life were and are in the perception of adherents, and how they find resolution of those problems. Christian readers could and should build

their responses to the Chaitanyite religion, or any religion, out of direct personal familiarity such as this and similar books provide. Merely to apply in judgment some ancient theological formula about religions after plucking it from midair does not provide sound or just evaluations.

A scholar who is sensitive to modern religious issues will sense the importance of Rosen's book as evidence of the coming of a new age in communication between religions. The appearance, in the English language, in the West, of such a Hindu missionary publication betokens the beginning of two-way interreligious communication of exceptional directness and force. Formerly it was the Occidental, only, who had the wealth and technology to promote his religion throughout the world. Adherents of the Oriental faiths, subjected to forceful Christian proclamations and lacking effective means to respond, felt disadvantaged, powerless and angry, and some even denied the rightness of free propagation of religion. In defensive mood some Hindus of the time portrayed Hinduism as a national religion in its very nature, and saw India as that national religion's exclusive preserve. In our time and in literature such as the publication at hand we see Hinduism shaking off such self-imposed limitations, overcoming its former sense of weakness, and freeing itself of old resentments as well.

Understanding itself to be a religion for all nations, it takes up a world language and addresses the world with confidence. For one hundred years Chaitanyism under the name of the Gaudiya Mission cherished a vision of itself as an expanding faith. For fifty years it has sent forth missions confidently to

the west, first to Britain and then to the U.S.A. It is a form of Hinduism that is frank, open, actively communicative and committed to religious freedom. I have seen no evidence that it is not committed to free propagation of religion in its Indian homeland as well as abroad. The consequences for the religious life of the world will be great. I venture to believe that they will be good also. A root of rancor has been removed and friendlier interchange between religions already prevails. There will be jostling and bickering still, no doubt, as world-faiths continue down their historical paths in closer communication and interaction. But their perceptions of each other will not be fogged, as formerly, by acerbities of feeling rising out of inequality of opportunity. With better access to information and greater openness to information, interreligious attitudes may be shaped for the better by reason of being based upon actualities of the religions rather than upon popular fictions about their nature. Regarding the ultimate outcome, let us not pontificate about a future that no human eye can see. Let us try to know our neighbors as they are, and pray that the one God, in His own mysterious ways that we seldom can foresee, will guide interchange between religions to a providential consummation of His own.

Introduction

For the last one hundred years, technological advancement has afforded us many modern conveniences and advantages over the pre-industrial period. Man has harnessed the power of the atom. He hurls probes to photograph and map distant planets. He mines the ocean floor and continues to make significant breakthroughs in the fields of chemistry, physics, and natural biology. Man's technology is more advanced than he ever expected it to be.

Yet for every disease cured a new one arises. And men and women wonder aloud about their future in a world bristling with nuclear weaponry. While we patiently wait for destruction, humans live with vermin in major inner-city areas and violent crime

soars in once quiet neighborhoods. Thus, while technology may have improved, we must admit that in many ways our quality of life has not. We have inadvertently replaced tranquility with technology, and we consistently look for a viable alternative.

This is not to say that technology is necessarily some vicious fiend to be avoided at all costs. There are appropriate ways to make good use of technology, which can then become an asset for the aspiring spiritual seeker. This and other similar books, for instance, could not be printed or widely circulated without the use of modern technology.

In fact, the greatest religious teachers have taught that “otherworldly” pursuits can be fully realized while existing in the here and now, making full use of material nature. Use, but not abuse. The great sages and prophets throughout history knew that abuse of material nature engenders a concomitant self-abuse. What goes around comes around. Action and reaction. Cause and effect. Karma.

Contemporary society is a good example. The more “advanced” we get, the more we seem to exploit our environment. And we ourselves must suffer as a result. Thus, despite access to every modern amenity, we still experience a great void, a lack, a cavity that desperately needs to be filled. A substantial “slice of life” is missing. This can easily be attributed to our single-minded and anxious pursuit of materialism (or technology), which, incidentally, never accomplished its end—namely, to make people happy. The net result is that many have decided to pursue spirituality in earnest. Usher in the New Age.

While some writers and social critics consider man's reactionary quest for spiritual knowledge to

be a positive outcome of a world gone mad with secular advancement, there is another school—and rightly so!—that brings to light an inherent downside to the New Age “enlightenment.” We are now beset, they say, with a plethora of every conceivable kind of metaphysical, mystical mumbo-jumbo, and the result is that the mind rejects spirituality in the same way that it initially rejected materialism. And so you have a sort of cat-and-mouse game, wherein one rejects material advancement for spiritual life and then rejects spiritual life for the same kind of material advancement that one had rejected in the first place. The game goes on; the chase goes back and forth; the mind is sent reeling. As a result, the mass of people settle for a sort of placated materialism.

Such confusion was addressed five hundred years ago by the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan—Shri Rupa Goswami, Shri Sanatan Goswami, Shri Raghunath Bhatta Goswami, Shri Raghunath Das Goswami, Shri Jiva Goswami, and Shri Gopal Bhatta Goswami. Far from suggesting that one toss up one's hands in frustration, resigning one's fate to one of complacent materialism, they propounded a sensible doctrine of devotional practice that culminates in divine love. Scientific, calculated procedure (*sadhana-bhakti*) and mystical spontaneity (*raganuga-bhakti*) both play a part in the Goswamis' theology. In their system one does, indeed, throw up one's hands, but not in disappointment or resignation. Rather, one raises one's hands in glorification of the Supreme.

But this glorification is not whimsical. It is not a concocted or sentimental philosophy propounded by conditioned souls who have imperfect

senses and the tendencies to be illusioned, make mistakes, and cheat. Rather, it is an exhaustive theistic process that is deeply rooted in a time-honored scriptural tradition having as its source ancient India's divinely inspired Vedic texts. This immersion in bona-fide scriptural commentary, so characteristic of the Six Goswamis, can spare one the otherwise inevitable burden of faulty mental speculation and gross misconception.

Thus, the Six Goswamis sought not to invent some imaginative or novel interpretation of scripture, but rather to faithfully and clearly represent the original intent of the text itself. This was no easy task, for the Vedic scriptures represent the most vast storehouse of spiritual knowledge known to man, and the Goswamis had the laborious if also loving task of thoroughly analyzing the scriptures for the benefit of all spiritual seekers.

Their endeavor was explained by Shrinivas Acharya, a great saint and scholar of the early seventeenth century. In the second stanza of his *Shri Shri Shad-Goswami-ashtaka*, a song in praise of the Six Goswamis, he makes clear that their most important contribution was to "scrutinizingly study all the revealed scriptures with the aim of establishing eternal religious principles for the benefit of all human beings." In other words, rather than contributing more speculative commentaries to an already confused religious world, they used logic and reason to scientifically analyze all existing religious scriptures. They *passed down in disciplic succession* the conclusions of the predecessor teachers and the compilers of the Vedic texts. In this way they sought to alleviate the suffering of mankind.

People are suffering due to want of knowledge. This is clearly seen in the confusion that exists today, especially in secular Western countries. As stated previously, when one is materially exhausted, one generally turns to religion. But without proper guidance, the religious quest can also lead to confusion, and one then again takes shelter of the materialistic life that one knows so well.

But the work of the Goswamis can save one from that back and forth dilemma so characteristic of today's society. When properly applied, their philosophy of *yukta-vairagya*, or "practical renunciation," solves the dichotomy between tranquility and technology. The Goswamis taught the *proper utilization* of material phenomena. That is, everything is meant to be used in the service of the Absolute Truth. The confidential, detailed procedure of just how to do this was revealed by the Six Goswamis.

Before relishing the specifics of their philosophical system as well as the life and work of each, it would perhaps be useful to briefly outline the life of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who appeared in West Bengal, India, in the late fifteenth century. Shri Chaitanya was known by His followers as an esoteric descent of Lord Krishna in the role of His own devotee. It was Shri Chaitanya Himself who inspired the Six Goswamis in their own spiritual quest, and so some hagiographical information, with special attention to the specific situations in which He met each of the Goswamis for the first time, must be considered indispensable to this study. While volumes have been written on the subject of Mahaprabhu's life and times, we will proceed with a brief overview.

Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

During a lunar eclipse in the winter of A.D. 1486, the fortunate inhabitants of Navadvip (Mayapur), a small village in West Bengal, India, saw the birth of Vishvambhar Mishra, later to be known as Shri Chaitanya. Traditional commentators have remarked that this “winter” birth had great symbolic meaning. Shri Chaitanya's system of *yoga*, which centered around chanting and dancing—the natural exuberance of the soul in communion with God—was especially recommended in the scriptures for the current age of Kali, the “winter” of the four cyclical ages that are enumerated in the Sanskrit Vedic literature of ancient India.

These scriptures predicted that an incarnation of the Absolute Truth would descend (*avatar*) to teach the chanting of spiritual sound vibrations, *mantra* meditation, as a yogic science. When done congregationally, it is called *sankirtan*, and when done as a private meditation, quietly and on prayer beads, it is called *japa*. Both forms of chanting (*kirtan*) were eventually taught by Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and systematically expounded upon by the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan.

Having fulfilled the prophesy of scripture, which not only predicted His *sankirtan* mission but also specifically mentioned His parentage and some of His esoteric activities, Shri Chaitanya was gradually accepted as a dual manifestation of Radha and Krishna by His intimate followers. In fact, Shri Chaitanya's most important biographers, such as Vrindavandas Thakur, Shri Murari Gupta, Lochandas Thakur, and especially Shrila Krishnadas Kaviraj,

have pointed out that both the female manifestation of God (Shrimati Radharani) and the male manifestation (Shri Krishna) dance together in the one body of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Through the agency of His Six Goswamis, He taught the sweetness of this dancing to the rest of the world.

But before this was to occur, Shri Chaitanya distinguished Himself as a scholar of unprecedented caliber. This was important. He and His followers anticipated that the chanting and dancing process might be ridiculed as mere sentiment or even hysteria, and for a time it *was* misconstrued in this way. But Shri Chaitanya's own example of mature scholarship, and that of the Goswamis after Him, was to eventually lay to rest all such unfounded speculation. Those who have taken the time to research the work of Shri Chaitanya and His Six Goswamis have seen that these personalities were not mere sentimentalists. Devotion was counterbalanced by reason, so the accusation of some unwarranted "fundamentalism" or "fanaticism" just did not apply.

In fact, Shri Chaitanya's fame as a scholar gradually took Him to His ancestral village in East Bengal (now Bangladesh), where a major development took place in His fledgling *sankirtan* mission. It was here that He first disclosed His esoteric purpose in spreading His movement as the divine dispensation for the present age. This mercy was bestowed upon Tapan Mishra (a scholar who had sincerely searched for Shri Chaitanya to ask about the ultimate goal of life). Mishra was the first to hear directly from the Master's lips that the prescribed *yoga* for the current epoch in world history is the chanting of the holy name of Krishna. This process of chant-

ing, said Shri Chaitanya, is both the means and the end of spiritual life.

Except for the benediction that He bestowed upon this scholar, Shri Chaitanya kept His mission confidential, at least until some years later, after His initiation. Commentators have difficulty explaining why Shri Chaitanya chose to make an exception in this one case by revealing His mission to Tapan Mishra. Critics have ridiculed this action as premature. Yet those who have faith in Shri Chaitanya see a divine plan in all of His activities. In fact, there are scholars of Chaitanyite Vaishnavism who propose that Shri Chaitanya instructed Tapan Mishra because Mishra he was the father of Shri Raghunath Bhatta Goswami, who eventually became one of Shri Chaitanya's most important followers, one of the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan. For this reason, it is said, Shri Chaitanya showed special mercy to Tapan Mishra. However, there is no textual evidence to suggest that Shri Chaitanya met Raghunath Bhatta Goswami at this time.

Rather, it is said that He met the Goswami years later, when He visited Benares, an Indian city well-known as a center of impersonalistic¹ and mayavadi² philosophy. These two traditional schools of thought, more monistic than theistic, were repugnant to Shri Chaitanya. Yet He nonetheless asked Tapan Mishra to settle in Benares, where these terrible Vedic heterodoxies are propounded. Shri Chaitanya felt that Mishra would be an important representative there, especially after revealing to him the secrets of His *sankirtan* mission.³

Although Tapan Mishra wanted desperately to return to Navadvip and in this way remain with

Shri Chaitanya, he sacrificed his own desire in order to carry out the will of the Lord. He did in fact go to Benares, eventually playing an important role in the spreading of the *sankirtan* movement. Thus, some say that Shri Chaitanya revealed His mission to Tapan Mishra because of the latter's sense of total sacrifice. Whatever the reason may be, it is known for certain that Shri Chaitanya revealed His *sankirtan* mission for the first time in East Bengal.

Soon after this interaction with Tapan Mishra, Shri Chaitanya returned to His hometown, Navadvip. Upon returning, He found that His first wife had died prematurely (He married at a young age), and His mother, Sachidevi, specifically requested that He marry a second time. This He did, and Shrimati Vishnupriya proved to be an exemplary devotee and ideal wife. At this point, however, Shri Chaitanya's life was more intellectual than familial, and He opened a *tol* (or "school") for the study of Sanskrit grammar, polemics, and philosophical hermeneutics. The chanting and dancing, for which He was soon to become so popular, had not yet manifested in His day-to-day pastimes.

When He reached His sixteenth year, Shri Chaitanya experienced a vital transformation. After a pilgrimage to Gaya, where He was initiated into the ten-syllable Gopal *mantra* and the chanting of the holy name—Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare—He returned to Navadvip in a "God-maddened" state. He was now like a live wire, His electrical devotion affecting everyone in proximity. One could feel His presence as He approached, and the contagious love He exuded had

the peculiar effect of permeating the entire being of anyone who came into contact with Him.

Both stuffy intellectuals and armchair philosophers would uncharacteristically sing and dance if Shri Chaitanya crossed their path. Professional reciters of scripture, who were hardly faithful practitioners, would easily be transformed into serious devotees by something as simple as His glance. Businessmen and even kings would almost mystically cry in ecstasy by His mere touch. Shri Chaitanya's contagion of divine love cut through all social stratifications and caste barriers. He and His followers, who by the time He returned to Navadvip were increasing by the hundreds, successfully established the *sankirtan* movement of chanting and dancing as the prescribed method of God realization for the current day and age.

Then, in February 1510, just prior to His twenty-fifth birthday, Shri Chaitanya entered the monastic order of *sannyasa*, shaving His head and donning the robes of a celibate mendicant. Just after accepting this renounced order of life, He intended to go on pilgrimage to Vrindavan, the transcendental village where Lord Krishna had advented some 4,500 years earlier. But His intense desire to go to Vrindavan would not be realized on this occasion. His associate Nityananda Prabhu had conspired with the other devotees to bring Him back to Shantipur, in West Bengal, in order to lovingly associate with Him one last time before He assumed His role as a travelling mendicant.

It was here, in Shantipur, that Shri Chaitanya met Raghunath Das Goswami.⁴ Chronologically, he was the first of the Six Goswamis that Shri

Chaitanya would meet. The fifteen-year-old Raghunath Das had run away from an extremely wealthy family. His father, Govardhan Majumdar, was in fact a multi-millionaire. But the young boy had heard about Shri Chaitanya from his earliest days and thus fervently wanted to adopt the life of a travelling mendicant, emulating Shri Chaitanya by totally devoting himself to the service of the Lord. After ten blissful days in the company of His intimate followers, however, Shri Chaitanya was ready to move on. And the young Raghunath Das returned home.

From Shantipur, Shri Chaitanya went to Jagannath Puri, for He had promised His mother that He would make Puri His headquarters (It was in close proximity to Navadvip, and she would thus regularly hear news of His activities.). In Puri, He met Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, a great scholar of the period. Shri Chaitanya succeeded in impressing the Bhattacharya with His devotion and scholasticism, thus winning him as a disciple.

Soon after, however, Shri Chaitanya decided to tour all of South India. Externally, He stated that His journey was primarily to search for His brother Vishvarupa, who had taken *sannyasa* much earlier and had travelled into Maharashtra. But His inner purpose was to bring His method of divine love to all of India as an aromatic flower brings a delightful fragrance on a spring day.

Proceeding south, Shri Chaitanya met Ramananda Raya on the banks of the Godavari River. The word *godavari* indicates "the summit or the fulfillment of the senses," and His dialogue with Shri Ramananda unmistakably takes its listeners beyond that level of perfection. These conversations consti-

tute the zenith of spiritual knowledge. Fortunately, they have been recorded for all time by Shri Chaitanya's biographers, particularly Shrila Krishnadas Kaviraj in his *Shri Chaitanya-charitamrita*.⁵

Shri Chaitanya was so moved by this dialogue that He revealed to the Raya His manifestation as Radha and Krishna. In the past, He had revealed to other devotees His form as Vishnu, the Universal Form, and even a highly esoteric six-armed form, but only to Ramananda Raya did He reveal His complete ontological nature as a dual manifestation of Radha and Krishna, the original spiritual couple.

As Shri Chaitanya progressed on His journey southward, He visited many holy places, further sanctifying them by bringing the divine name and teaching others how to chant with great devotion. Soon He reached Shri Rangam, and there he stayed at the home of Vyenkata Bhatta, a South Indian priest (*brahmana*). Vyenkata and his two brothers, Tirumalla and Prabodhananda Saraswati, frequently engaged in religious dialogue with Shri Chaitanya. They would often discuss and compare the Supreme Lord's *aishvarya* feature, the opulent Narayana, as He is worshiped in Shri Rangam, with the Lord's *madhurya* aspect, the sweet, loving personality of Shri Krishna, as envisioned by Shri Chaitanya and His followers.

Both features of the Supreme are genuine and are revealed in the Vedic literature, but Shri Chaitanya's conception proved superior in the end, for love outshines opulence. This truth is self-evident and is endorsed by the scriptures. Further, the scriptures are emphatic about Krishna's supreme posi-

tion: *krishnas tu bhagavan svayam*—that is, Krishna is the original and Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is stated in *Shrimad Bhagavatam* (1.3.28), the cream of ancient India's scriptural legacy. After describing various manifestations of the Supreme, this most important Vedic text declares in no uncertain terms that the Krishna conception is complete, primeval, and the last word in transcendence.

These ideas were accepted by Vyenkata and his brothers, particularly Prabodhananda Saraswati, who became a staunch follower of Shri Chaitanya. Vyenkata's son, Gopal Bhatta, a young boy who was fortunate enough to hear his father and uncles debate with Shri Chaitanya, was also moved to become a serious follower, and he eventually became the famous Gopal Bhatta Goswami, one of the Six. After meeting the second of the Six Goswamis in Shri Rangam, Shri Chaitanya travelled further south.

Completing an exhaustive 4,000-mile walking pilgrimage throughout the Deccan, Shri Chaitanya returned to Jagannath Puri toward the end of 1512. Winning the heart of Maharaja Prataparudra, the king of Orissa, Shri Chaitanya taught him the religion of chanting and dancing. As the yearly Ratha-yatra, "The Festival of the Chariots," was underway, and as Shri Chaitanya and Maharaja Prataparudra took part in it, the subcontinent of India seemed to be inundated with love of God. But after two years of relishing spiritual exchanges with His intimate followers in Puri, Shri Chaitanya again decided to attempt a pilgrimage to Vrindavan. And so in 1513, with a retinue of enthusiastic followers, He started for the holy land of Lord Krishna.

Once again, however, He was detoured from His goal. As Nityananda Prabhu and the residents of Navadvip had distracted Him from going to Vrindavan just after His *sannyasa* initiation, this time, too, His plans would be changed by divine providence. Commentators suggest that these diversions were meant to increase the sweetness of His eventual success in His journey to Vrindavan. Just as love of God in separation (*vipralambha-rasa*) is sometimes considered more intense than in union (*sambhoga*), the desire to go to Vrindavan became overwhelming because of His inability to do so. The anticipation magnified the joy.

This was to be His second attempt, but while en route He passed through Ramakeli, and there He met Dabir Khas and Sakara Malik, two brothers who were employed by the Islamic occupational government in Bengal. These two had corresponded with Shri Chaitanya⁶ and had lamented that although they were originally “priests” (*brahmanas*) from Karnataka, in South India, they had now debased themselves by associating with Muslim political leaders who had no regard for the higher, spiritual values of life.

Initiating these two brothers into the *sankirtan* movement, Shri Chaitanya revealed to them their eternal relationships with Him. Then, He gave to the elder brother, Sakara Malik, the name “Sanatan Goswami.” And to Dabir Khas, He gave the name “Rupa Goswami.” They were to become two of His most important followers. Being senior men, competent in many languages such as Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, and other local dialects, and being experienced in worldly affairs as well as in religious doc-

trine, they would become the natural leaders of the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan.

Shri Chaitanya instructed them to go to Vrindavan and unearth the then hidden holy places of Lord Krishna's advent. Due to the passage of time, these sites had become obscured, and due to Islamic fundamentalism, holy shrines had, in some cases, been destroyed. But now Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis would reestablish them. In addition, Shri Chaitanya asked Rupa and Sanatan to compile exhaustive treatises on the science of *sankirtan*. These would become widely known as the revered *Bhakti-shastras*, or "scriptures that elucidate pure devotional service."

After this historic meeting with the third and fourth of the Six Goswamis, Shri Chaitanya cancelled His trip to Vrindavan. In fact, tradition holds that He actually did not, in this particular case, desire to go to Vrindavan at all. Rather, He merely used this as a pretext for meeting Rupa and Sanatan. Geographically, this theory holds much weight, especially since Ramakeli is hardly on the way to Vrindavan.

As the pastime unfolds, however, Shri Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis, who were employed by the Sultan Hussein Shah, reminded Shri Chaitanya of the tension between the sectarian Hindus and Muslims and insisted that He would not be safe traveling to Vrindavan at this time. Further, they reminded Him of the etiquette for *sannyasis*—that they should not travel with large retinues, like some worldly king or opulent politician, especially to a holy place such as Vrindavan. Shri Chaitanya seriously considered their arguments and decided to return to Puri.

On His way back from Ramakeli, however, He stopped at Shantipur to visit His mother and the other intimate followers living in the Navadvip area. There He met Raghunath Das Goswami for the second time.⁷ Now the boy was four years older (he was nineteen), and although he still wanted to renounce his riches and become an ascetic, Shri Chaitanya instructed him to wait for the proper time, perhaps when he was more mature. Submissive to Shri Chaitanya's direction, the boy returned home after approximately six days. Having instructed Raghunath Das, Shri Chaitanya returned to Puri.

But He could only remain there for a few months before He became anxious, once again, to go to Vrindavan. In this, His third endeavor, He was successful. Travelling with Balabhadra Bhattacharya and his assistant, Shri Chaitanya passed through the dense Jharikhanda forest in an attempt to avoid the Muslim soldiers about whom Shri Rupa and Sanatan had given warning.

Reaching Benares, Shri Chaitanya stayed at the house of Tapan Mishra, who had been instructed to reside there while in East Bengal and was now living with his family in a simple cottage. At this time Shri Chaitanya met Raghunath Bhatta, the fifth of the Six Goswamis.⁸ He was the young son of Tapan Mishra and would become well-known as a consummate chef, singer, and reciter of *Shrimad Bhagavatam*. After staying with Tapan Mishra's family for ten days, Shri Chaitanya proceeded to Vrindavan.

Finally arriving in Mathura, Krishna's birthplace, and then moving on to Vrindavan, Shri Chaitanya was in His own element. He had finally "returned," in a spiritual sense, as He was considered

nondifferent from Lord Krishna, who never sets foot out of Vrindavan. Now thirty years old, He at last succeeded in coming "home," back to the land of Krishna, although in this incarnation it was to be His first and last visit there. As He went to the various holy places associated with the Lord's pastimes, especially the twelve forests of Vraja, He was recognized even by the animals, who nuzzled Him as if to welcome an old friend. Shri Chaitanya's appreciation of Vrindavan was beyond words, and His already uncontrollable ecstasy increased by magnificent proportions.

In the winter of 1516, after an ecstatic pilgrimage throughout the Vrindavan area, Shri Chaitanya proceeded back to Puri, passing through Prayag (now Allahabad), where He instructed Rupa Goswami for ten days, and then returned through Benares, where He instructed Sanatan Goswami for a period of two months. While in Benares, it is said that Shri Chaitanya converted Prakashananda Saraswati, then one of India's most famous impersonalistic philosophers. This won for Shri Chaitanya great fame and tens of thousands of additional followers.

After returning to Puri, He spent the remaining eighteen years of His life in an exalted state of spiritual absorption, instructing followers, exhibiting mystical, ecstatic symptoms, and inspiring others to the level where they, too, would shed tears of divine love. Once, during these latter pastimes, He uttered the *Shikshashatakam*, eight prayers that are attributed to Him as an original composition. These were written down by His intimate follower Shri Swarup Damodar and have been preserved by Shrila

Krishnadas Kaviraj, in his *Chaitanya-charitamrit*, and by Rupa Goswami, in his *Padyavali*.

Other than these few stanzas, like Jesus and Buddha before Him, Shri Chaitanya committed nothing to writing. Rather, He instructed His intimate followers to codify and elaborate upon His already profound theological system. In this respect, Shri Chaitanya has been compared to Socrates: "Just as we know of Socrates and his teachings not from his own writings, but through the writings of his disciples, like Plato, so also we know of Shri Chaitanya's philosophy principally through the writings of his spiritual disciples."⁹

This comment especially refers to the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan. They, in particular, codified Shri Chaitanya's teachings, elucidating every philosophical detail in complex Sanskrit jargon. For instance, Shri Chaitanya's philosophy of the holy name was certainly *demonstrated* by the ecstasy He often displayed while chanting. But the understanding of just *why* such chanting should lead to rapturous spirituality was not given philosophical grounding until the works of the Goswamis. They gave rational argument for Shri Chaitanya's conclusion: the Lord and His name are one. Since God is absolute, the Goswamis taught, there is no difference between Him and His name. Thus, when chanted purely, the name puts one in direct touch with the Supreme. This was experienced by Shri Chaitanya, catapulting Him into spiritual ecstasy. This was also experienced by the Goswamis, and they put their conclusions into writing.

Norvin J. Hein, Professor Emeritus of Religion at Yale University, very nicely articulates the Goswami conclusion of holy name theology:

They [the Six Goswamis] dared to say, not merely that the *power* of God is present in such recitation, but that, when the name is uttered in faith, God *Himself* is present. The Vrindavan Goswamis call this belief the doctrine of *namanaminoradvaita* or *namanaminorabheda*, the “non-difference between the Named One and the Name.” Jiva Goswami in his *Bhagavat Sandarbha* states the main point bluntly: *bhagavat-svarupam eva nam*, “The Name of the Supreme Lord is His very essence”....Jiva Goswami in one passage actualizes this possibility by remarking about the Name, “Speaking of *avatars* [the descent of God], this is an *avatar* of the Supreme in the form of syllables: *varnarupenavataro 'yam*.”¹⁰

In this way, Shri Chaitanya's philosophy was given academic language and annotated for future generations. But in this task the Goswamis were not alone. Other important compilers, editors, and philosophers of the Chaitanyite school include dozens of notable personalities whose unique contributions should not be underestimated. Still, having been Shri Chaitanya's direct disciples, the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan are doubtless the most prominent of all.

It might be mentioned here that Jiva Goswami, youngest if also the most prolific of the Six,

was not a direct disciple of Shri Chaitanya but was, rather, a disciple of his own uncle, Rupa Goswami. Consequently, some scholars opine that Shri Jiva never came into direct personal contact with Shri Chaitanya, or never even saw Him, and they compare him to Luke, or even Paul, who never came into contact with Jesus.¹¹

But the great teachers of Chaitanyite Vaishnavism describe a meeting of sorts. In the *Bhaktiratnakara*, for instance, Narahari Chakravarti tells us that when Shri Jiva was a mere child he saw Chaitanya Mahaprabhu at Ramakeli.¹² The story runs as follows: Since Shri Rupa and Sanatan were important officials in the Muslim government, they had to meet Shri Chaitanya secretly, and therefore they did not bring Shri Jiva, who, at the time, was a small child. Nonetheless, the boy hid nearby and watched his uncles and father [The father's name was Vallabha—he was Rupa and Sanatan's younger brother], lovingly converse with Shri Chaitanya. This same clandestine meeting, with special attention to Jiva Goswami, is mentioned by Shrila Bhaktivinoda Thakur in his *Navadvīp-dham Mahatmya*.¹³

In one sense, it may be questioned why such a meeting should be considered relevant. If Shri Jiva was just a child when he saw Shri Chaitanya, it may be said that the meeting was devoid of any real meaning. But Shri Jiva, like Gopal Bhatta, Raghunath Das, and Raghunath Bhatta, who were also very young when they met Shri Chaitanya for the first time, eventually decided to devote his life to the *sankīrtan* mission. This was the effect that Shri Chaitanya had. By merely catching sight of Him, people's hearts were touched, and (regardless of age,

caste, or creed) they became inundated with genuine spiritual insight. Thus, Jiva Goswami's early meeting with Shri Chaitanya must be considered a significant occurrence.

To recapitulate, except for this incident with Jiva Goswami, Shri Chaitanya met the Six Goswamis in the following order: First, He met Raghunath Das in Shantipur; then He met Gopal Bhatta in South India; next, He met Rupa and Sanatan at Ramakeli; and, finally, He met Raghunath Bhatta in Benares on His way to Vrindavan.

Although Shri Chaitanya's pastimes are replete with mystical occurrences and profound theological revelations, upon which we have not even touched,¹⁴ His respective meetings with the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan constitute the most monumental developments in the early history of His movement. For it was they who initially gave academic shape to Shri Chaitanya's incomparably profound teachings. According to Chicago University professor Edward C. Dimock: "The Six Goswamins among them produced over 219 different works in Sanskrit—it is most significant that they wrote in Sanskrit—tying every teaching of the Bengal school into the orthodox traditions of Indian religion."¹⁵

Interestingly, before Shri Krishnadas Kaviraj's *Chaitanya-charitamrita* (that is, before the early seventeenth century), the concept of "Six Goswamis" does not appear, as such, in any of Shri Chaitanya's authorized biographies. Murari Gupta, perhaps the earliest biographer, mentions all except Jiva Goswami. Vrindavandas Thakur, another early biographer, mentions only Rupa and Sanatan. Kavi Karnapur, in both his biographical poem and drama,

refers to Rupa, Sanatan, and Raghunath Das Goswamis.¹⁶ Since the conception of the Goswamis as an authoritative unit did not fully develop until the time of *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, this work will primarily be based upon that later text.

Although *Chaitanya-charitamrita* refers to the Six Goswamis as a single group, the actual epithet *Choi Goshoi* ("Six Goswamis") is found for the first time in the poetry of Narottam Das Thakur.¹⁷ Soon after, it was also used in the writings of Shrinivas Acharya and the generations of devotees who followed him. The important contributions of these stalwart Vaishnavas, especially those in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, will also be used as a reference throughout this book.

Other source material includes *Bhakti-ratnakara*, an important eighteenth-century Bengali work. Its fifteen chapters survey the development of the *sankirtan* movement from Shri Chaitanya's time to the end of the seventeenth century. Also referred to here, and perhaps more important for our present work, is the storehouse of transcendental knowledge available in the many writings of Shrila Bhaktivinode Thakur and His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, without whose grace and blessings this book would be a useless waste of paper.

If trees are to be sacrificed for the sake of this work, we only pray that their sacrifice does not go in vain. Shri Chaitanya taught that a spiritual seeker should be more tolerant than a tree (*taror api sabishnuna*), for a tree gives shade even to one who cuts her branches. But, if it could, even a tree might protest much of today's literature, for which vast forests are sacrificed. Such unnecessary exploitation

of the environment speaks directly to the state of modern man, who neglects his genetic bonding with all that lives, including trees. Rather than ecologically “rape” the world in which we ourselves must live, man should carefully consider the value and necessity of the literature he produces. Sincerely praying that this work does not inadvertently contribute to this modern-day carelessness by promulgating even subtle materialistic views, I begin by echoing the words of Shrila Krishnadas Kaviraj:

*shri-rupa, sanatan, bhatta-raghunath
shri-jiva, gopala-bhatta, dasa-raghunath
ei chaya gurura karon charana vandana
yaha haite vighna-nasa, abhishta-purana*

“I pray to the lotus feet of my six instructing spiritual masters—Shri Rupa, Sanatan, Bhatta Raghunath, Shri Jiva, Gopal Bhatta, and Raghunath Das—so that all impediments to my writing this literature will be annihilated and the real desire of all living entities will be fulfilled.”¹⁸

Notes

1. Impersonalism is the philosophy that God is not, in an ultimate sense, a person. Impersonalists claim that personal traits are limiting and thus the Absolute Truth must be devoid of all such qualities. *Advaita-vedanta*, the natural extension of this philosophy, teaches that all living beings are one with God, and that both God and man are formless. This view is now considered characteristic of Indian philosophy. But Vaishnavism represents the monotheistic

tradition of the Vedic literature. According to the four genuine *sampradayas*, or the recognized lineages of disciplic descent, the Vaishnavas' personalistic, theistic view, propounded by Shri Chaitanya, is actually the original Vedic understanding.

2. *Mayavadis* are also impersonalists. They claim that the Lord's form, as when He descends (*avatar*), is ultimately an illusion. There are two types of *mayavadis*: Kashira Mayavadis—followers of Shankaracharya (popular in Kashi, also known as Benares); and Saranath Mayavadis, or Buddhists.

3. The Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*—Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare—was revealed to Tapan Mishra. See Vrindavandas Thakur, *Chaitanya Bhagavat, Adi-lila*, ch. 14, text 145.

4. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (trans.), *Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita*, 17 volumes (Los Angeles, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1975), *Antya-lila* 2, ch. 6, p. 203. In addition, see *Madhya-lila* 6, ch. 16, text 223, p. 271. Also see Bhaktipradip Tirtha, *Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu* (Calcutta, Gaudiya Mission, 1947), p. 279. Taken together, these texts indicate that Raghunath Das was the first Goswami to meet Shri Chaitanya. If this is true, then the chronology would run as follows: First Shri Chaitanya met Raghunath Das at Shantipur; then He met Gopal Bhatta; Rupa, Sanatan, and Jiva; and, finally, Raghunath Bhatta.

5. For more information see my *India's Spiritual Renaissance: The Life and Times of Lord Chaitanya* (New York, FOLK Books, 1988), ch. 9.
6. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 1, ch. 1, text 209, p. 126. Also see Shrila Bhaktivinode Thakur, *Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu: His Life and Precepts* (1896), published as a prologue in His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *The Teachings of Lord Chaitanya* (Los Angeles, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1974), p. xxx.
7. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 6, ch. 16, p. 159.
8. Ibid., *Madhya-lila* 7, ch. 17, text 90, p. 46.
9. See O. B. L. Kapoor, *The Philosophy and Religion of Sri Chaitanya* (Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1977), p. 57.
10. Norvin Hein, "Caitanya's Ecstasies And The Theology of the Name" in Bardwell L. Smith (ed.), *Hinduism* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1976), pp. 28-9.
11. Sushil Kumar De, *Early History of the Vaishnava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta, FIRMA KLM, reprint, 1961), p. 86.
12. Narahari Chakravarti, *Bhakti-ratnakara* (Bengali edition), First Wave (Calcutta, Gaudiya Math, 1960), text 638, p. 30. Also see Jadunatha Sinha, *Jiva Goswami's Religion of Devotion and Love* (Varanasi, Chowkhamba Vidyabawan, 1983), p. 5.

13. Bhaktivinode Thakur, *Sri Navadvip-dham Mahatmya*, from an unpublished manuscript (trans., Banu Das), ch 1, p. 8.

14. Details are given in my *India's Spiritual Renaissance: The Life and Times Of Lord Chaitanya*, op. cit.

15. Edward C. Dimock Jr., *The Place of the Hidden Moon* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 77.

16. Sushil Kumar De (reprint, 1986), op. cit., p. 118.

17. Janardan Chakravarti, *Bengal Vaisnavism and Sri Caitanya* (Calcutta, Asiatic Society, 1975), p. 56.

18. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Antya-lila* 1, ch. 1, texts 3-4, p. 3.

1/ Raghunath Das Goswami

Raghunath Das Goswami (1495-1571)¹ is known as one of the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan, the primary disciples of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Although there are teachers who today carry the title “Goswami” or its derivative “swami” (literally, “one who has mastered his senses”), they generally fall short of the standard set by the Six Goswamis under discussion, who, according to the Vaishnava tradition, are considered more than mere theologians or even great saints. They are eternal associates of the Lord, descending to assist Him in His mission of reclaiming the fallen, conditioned souls.

In this context, the Six Goswamis are viewed as *manjaris*, the intimate maidservants and assistants of Radharani in the spiritual world.² There they

engage in the highest service to the Lord by making various arrangements for His pleasure, and at the same time, in the terrestrial realm,³ they assist Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in making His mission accessible to the world at large.

Remembering throughout that the Six Goswamis are actually *nitya-siddhas*, or “eternally liberated souls,” it becomes easier to understand their *lila* (or “play”) as they each externally adopt the guise of ordinary human beings. Their inner meditation is always fixed on the lotus feet of the Lord. Given this reverential perspective, some biographical information can be useful and will not stray our readers from the traditional understanding of the Goswamis’ ontological position.

Raghunath Das, the first of the Six Goswamis to meet Shri Chaitanya, was born in a small village called Chandpur (present-day Shri Krishnapur), located two miles from the Saptagram district of Hugli, West Bengal. An inheritor of vast opulence, Raghunath Das was the fortunate son of the wealthy Govardhan Majumdar, who was considered, even at that time, a multi-millionaire. Govardhan was the younger brother of Hiranya, a powerful landowner who, although a *Kayastha shudra* (of a lower caste), commanded great respect from his peers.

In fact, Hussein Shah, the Muslim emperor of Bengal, went so far as to lease Saptagram and its neighboring villages to the two wealthy brothers, Govardhan and Hiranya, even though they were not of the Islamic faith. In exchange, the two brothers had to annually pay a vast amount that was equal to their own yearly income (some 1,200,000 rupees) and see to the proper management of their domain.

Why would Govardhan and Hiranya give their entire yearly income for the burden of real estate, taxation, and finance? The first reason was to appease the Islamic occupational government, so that they and their loved ones could worship Lord Krishna unimpeded. Satisfied with their huge financial contribution, the Nawab Hussein Shah left the internal administration of the whole district under their able care, without even nominal interference. Secondly, under this new arrangement, Govardhan and Hiranya had greatly increased their own annual income to 2,000,000 rupees, and even further by the taxes accumulated from imports and exports.

The brothers had quite a reputation throughout most of Bengal—not only because of their power and wealth but also because of their piety and charity. Shri Chaitanya Himself used to refer to them as His “uncles,” perhaps because of their close friendship with His maternal grandfather, Shri Nilambhar Chakravarti. Actual blood relation is not likely, however, as they were *kayasthas* and Shri Chaitanya was a *brahmana*. Nonetheless, young Raghunath Das, unique among the Six Goswamis for his birth in a non-*brahmana* family, was the only child in the Majumdar household.

In his boyhood, he was instructed in the principles of Vaishnavism by Balaram Acharya, one of the most advanced devotees in Saptagram. Having received the association of Shri Chaitanya's intimate devotee, Haridas Thakur, Balaram Acharya was anxious to introduce his young student to the saint. This he did, and Raghunath imbibed a devotional spirit from the Thakur. As he grew into his teens, Raghunath's piety and spiritual insight grew as well.

Soon, in 1510, news of Shri Chaitanya's *sannyasa* reached Saptagram. Having heard that Nityananda Prabhu had diverted Shri Chaitanya from His pilgrimage to Vrindavan and led Him, instead, to nearby Shantipur, Raghunath Das pleaded with his father to let him go and see the great Shri Chaitanya, about whom the saint Haridas Thakur had told him so much. But the boy was young, merely fifteen years old, and so his rich father was hesitant, skeptical about allowing his well-bred boy association with common renunciants. Govardhan did not want his only son to renounce the world and leave the family. Nonetheless, Raghunath Das ran away from home and met Shri Chaitanya in Shantipur.⁴

The meeting was emotional and intense. Shri Chaitanya recognized His eternal associate, who had finally, in this life, returned to Him, and Raghunath Das enthusiastically fell at the Lord's feet, touching them with great devotion as a sign of humility. The scene was described by Swami Pradip Tirtha Maharaj, a disciple of Shrila Bhaktivinode Thakur: "When the Lord came to Shantipur after His *sannyasa*, Raghunath Das fell prostrate at His lotus feet, in a rapture of love, when Mahaprabhu touched him with His toe."⁵ This exchange deeply moved the two of them. But after ten days of intimately associating with the Navadvip devotees in Shantipur, Shri Chaitanya left for Jagannath Puri and Raghunath Das returned home.

Four years later, when Raghunath Das was almost nineteen years old, Shri Chaitanya returned to Shantipur. Raghunath Das was more enthusiastic than ever to attain the association of Shri Chaitanya. When Govardhan realized that he was not able to

control his son, he resigned himself to the boy's fate and allowed him exposure to the life of renunciation and spirituality. But he cautioned Raghunath Das to be on guard and to return home after a brief visit.

By this juncture in Shri Chaitanya's career, it may be noted, He had completed His famous tour of South India and had met Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis at Ramakeli. So He had achieved a considerable amount of renown as a saint and even as an *avatar*. Govardhan thus felt a little more secure in letting his young Raghunath Das associate with Shri Chaitanya and His followers.

The boy was sent to Shantipur ⁶ with princely escorts. Upon his arrival, he immediately went to the home of Advaita Acharya, where Shri Chaitanya had stayed during their first meeting and where He was now again staying. Tears of love flowed from Raghunath Das' eyes as he saw the form of Shri Chaitanya, who smiled at Raghunath Das as if seeing an old friend.

Although Raghunath Das was still eager to renounce family and riches, Shri Chaitanya encouraged him to return home. "Lord Krishna will direct you toward renunciation at the proper time," Shri Chaitanya told him, "For now, live as if you were a worldly man." And so after approximately six days, Raghunath Das returned to Saptagram.

A thoroughly changed person, young Raghunath Das proceeded to take Shri Chaitanya's instruction to heart. He responsibly managed his father's estate and married a girl of unexcelled beauty. In this way, he externally lived a charmed life of opulence, while deep in his soul he longed for the day

when he could renounce everything and live the simple life of an ascetic.

Raghunath's worldly life was to last only two years, however, for a calamity overtook the Majumdar family. The former governor of Saptagram, a Turk, had a grudge against Hiranya and Govardhan, for when they had taken over the district they had unintentionally usurped his possessions. Seeking vengeance and trying to ingratiate himself to the Nawab Hussain Shah, the ex-governor informed the Nawab that, although Hiranya and Govardhan were annually paying him 1,200,000 rupees, they were in fact holding back quite a bit more for themselves. In addition, he cautioned the Nawab that they had grown very powerful and might prove dangerous to the Islamic occupational government.

Consequently, the Nawab sent a team of soldiers to arrest the Majumdar family. Govardhan was away on a trip and Hiranya had fled upon receiving news of the rapidly approaching troops. Only Raghunath Das was still present when the soldiers arrived. Hiranya had told Raghunath Das about the impending doom, but the faithful Raghunath Das was unconcerned. He knew that his Lord would protect him. Still, when the soldiers arrived they arrested him, and he quietly went with them to Gauda, the then capital of Bengal.

Brought before the king, Raghunath Das was asked to divulge the whereabouts of his father and uncle. But he honestly did not know, and this is what he told his captors. At first, the king decided to have him tortured, but after hearing Raghunath Das deliver a magnificent soliloquy on the virtues of kind-

ness and the brotherhood of man under God,⁷ the king was moved to tears.

Appreciating that Raghunath was a great devotee of the Lord, the king knew that his talk was from the heart, and so he not only released him, but accepted him as his very own son. An amicable arrangement was then made regarding the financial situation of Hiranya and Govardhan, about which the entire problem had originated.

Soon after this incident, one of Shri Chaitanya's most intimate associates, Nityananda Prabhu,⁸ came to Panihati, a village four miles north of Calcutta, very close to Saptagram. With Him, an entourage of hundreds of devotees gathered to glorify God "with the timbrel and dance and the high sounding cymbals."⁹ In this way, Nityananda Prabhu passed three months, spreading Shri Chaitanya's mission of devotional love and gaining followers from neighboring villages.

Raghunath Das heard of Nityananda Prabhu's success in Panihati. The young Goswami wanted to meet Nityananda Prabhu and serve His lotus feet, for he knew that one could only get the mercy of Shri Chaitanya by first pleasing His eternal associate. To this end, Raghunath Das kept trying to run away from home, but he was consistently dragged back by his father. Finally relenting, Govardhan gave permission for Raghunath to see the great Nityananda, and the Goswami quickly set out for Panihati.

When Raghunath Das arrived, he found Nityananda Prabhu sitting on a large rock beneath a magnificent banyan tree.¹⁰ He looked effulgent, surrounded by hundreds of dedicated devotees. Raghu-

nath Das, approaching these great souls, was embarrassed, for in his humility he felt guilty about acting like an ordinary materialist. Sensing Raghunath Das' state of mind, Nityananda Prabhu decided to lovingly joke with him. And so, as Raghunath came forward, the following words emanated from Nityananda Prabhu's lips: "You are a thief, Raghunath Das! Come here, and I will now punish you."¹¹

Raghunath Das naturally became reluctant to approach Him. Nonetheless, Nityananda Prabhu caught hold of Raghunath Das and forcibly placed His feet on his head. All the devotees laughed as they saw Nityananda Prabhu's punishment turn into a humorous benediction.

Further "punishing" Raghunath Das, Nityananda Prabhu gave him the following order: "Prepare a big festival and feed all of the devotees with yogurt and chipped rice."¹² Hearing this, Raghunath Das was greatly pleased. Finally able to use his wealth in the service of the Lord, he immediately sent some of his servants to purchase the necessary ingredients.

Soon, the area was inundated by vast quantities of chipped rice, yogurt, milk, pastries, sugar, bananas, and assorted savories. Just to take part in the jubilant festivities, priests, laymen, and other pilgrims came from miles around. Seeing the crowd increasing, Raghunath Das arranged to acquire more provisions from the neighboring villages. He also brought some four hundred large, round earthen pots for soaking the chipped rice. Together, in a cooperative spirit, the devotees prepared the feast and while so doing they chanted the holy name with great ecstasy.

In addition to the countless devotees attending the festival were Nityananda Prabhu and other intimate associates of Shri Chaitanya. These intimate associates were each given a seat on a raised platform, as was the etiquette, and the other devotees sat around them. Everyone was then offered two earthen pots. One pot contained chipped rice with condensed milk. The other contained chipped rice with yogurt. The devotees ate to their full satisfaction and shouted "Hari bol! Chant the names of Hari. Chant the names of the Lord!"

At this time, by the will of Nityananda Prabhu, Shri Chaitanya mystically appeared on the scene. Only those devotees who were accomplished in spiritual realization were able to perceive Shri Chaitanya's presence. Both Shri Chaitanya and Nityananda Prabhu enjoyed seeing the devotees eating the chipped rice, yogurt, and condensed milk. Walking along the path where the devotees were sitting and eating, Nityananda Prabhu took a morsel off of each devotee's plate and playfully put it in Shri Chaitanya's mouth. Reciprocating, Shri Chaitanya did the same to Nityananda Prabhu. Raghunath Das relished watching this exchange.

After the feast, Raghunath Das liberally distributed gold and jewels to the devotees present, but they were indifferent to everything except their loving relationships with Raghunath Das and Nityananda Prabhu. This whole incident came to be known as the *Danda Mahotsava*, which means, ironically, "the Festivity of Punishment." To this day, pilgrims travel annually to Panihati in commemoration of the chipped rice *Danda Mahotsava* festival. It is celebra-

ted on the thirteenth day of the bright moon in the month of Jayishta (May-June).

Before returning to Saptagram, Raghunath Das was fortunate enough to have an intimate conversation with Nityananda Prabhu while only a few other devotees were present. Approaching with humility, Raghunath Das uttered the following words: "I am the lowest of men, the most sinful, fallen, and condemned. Nevertheless, I truly desire to attain the shelter of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Like a dwarf who wants to catch the moon, I have tried my best many times, but I have never been successful. Every time I tried to run away and give up family relationships, my parents unfortunately kept me bound up, sometimes by force.

"Without Your mercy," Raghunath Das continued, "no one can attain the shelter of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, but if You are merciful, even the lowest of men can attain shelter at His lotus feet. Although I am unfit and greatly afraid to submit this plea, I nonetheless request You, Nityananda Prabhu, to be especially merciful toward me by granting me shelter at the lotus feet of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu."¹³ In conclusion, Raghunath Das cried, "Placing Your feet on my head, give me the benediction that I may achieve the shelter of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu without difficulty. I fervently pray for this benediction."

Hearing this humble and devotional plea, Nityananda Prabhu smiled, feeling great satisfaction. As He turned to the other devotees, He said, "Raghunath Das is accustomed to a standard of material happiness that is equal to Indra's [an opulent demigod]. Because of the mercy already bestowed upon

him by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Raghunath Das, although situated in such material happiness, does not like it at all. Therefore let every one of you be merciful toward him and give him the benediction that he may very soon attain full shelter at the lotus feet of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.”¹⁴ In this way Nityananda Prabhu acquired for Raghunath Das the blessings of the assembled devotees, and then He cited scriptures¹⁵ so that the devotees could ascertain Raghunath's level of spiritual advancement.

Next, Nityananda Prabhu called Raghunath Das near Him and placed His feet on his head. Blessing Raghunath Das in this way, Nityananda Prabhu kindly let him know that Shri Chaitanya appeared at the Panihati Festival merely to show him favor. Further, Nityananda Prabhu informed him that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu actually ate the chipped rice and milk that Raghunath Das himself prepared.

Finally, Nityananda Prabhu gave him an indication of what was to occur in the near future: “Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu will fully accept you and place you under the charge of His secretary, Swarup Damodar. You will thus become one of the Lord's most confidential and internal servants. Being assured of this, return to your home. Very soon, without impediments, you will attain the full shelter of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.”¹⁶ After hearing this, Raghunath Das returned to Saptagram.

This time he could not even feign material interest. Previously, under Shri Chaitanya's order, he had pretended to be a pounds and shillings man. But now, having received the mercy of Nityananda Prabhu, he was God-intoxicated, and he could not control himself. Again and again he tried to escape

from his father's palace, to preach among the common people and to live the life of an ascetic. But his attempts were to no avail. Govardhan hired a large body of guards to specifically watch over Raghunath Das, and these able men always dragged him back to the palace.

Lamenting, his mother once suggested in total frustration that perhaps he should be tied to a pillar with a rope. After all, she said, he may one day escape the attention of the guards. But to this impractical suggestion came Govardhan's now historic reply: "If the attractions of vast wealth and a wife whose beauty is of celestial proportions cannot bind him to this kingdom, do you really think a slender rope can do it?"¹⁷

In due course, Raghunath Das received his chance to escape. Yadunandan Acharya was the family *guru* and priest, and on one particular occasion he took Raghunath Das with him to perform a religious ritual. The family, of course, had full trust in their *guru*, and so the guards went to sleep early that evening, reassured that Raghunath Das was in safe hands.

But Raghunath Das was not to be underestimated. He succeeded in convincing the *guru* that he could continue the prescribed ritual alone, and the simple, faithful teacher allowed him to do so. This was Raghunath's chance, and he knew it. Since no guards or concerned family members were anywhere in sight, he decided to seize the opportunity, even though it was by then late in the evening.

Travelling at first from village to village, Raghunath Das eventually decided to go through the jungles, for in this way his father and the family

guards would not be able to follow him. Meditating on Shri Chaitanya and Nityananda Prabhu, he decided to go toward Jagannath Puri, for at this time of year (July) all the devotees would converge there for the annual Ratha-yatra Festival. He walked about thirty miles in one day, and then he came upon a barn in which he decided to sleep.

Meanwhile, back in Saptagram, the Majumdar guards, servants, and watchmen went to Yadunandan Acharya to inquire about the whereabouts of Raghunath Das. When the elderly *guru* naively told his story, everyone realized what had happened: "Now Raghunath has taken the opportunity and has gone away!"

Raghunath's father, Govardhan, was wise. He knew that devotees from all over Bengal would be going to Puri for the Ratha-yatra Festival. He said to his guards: "Raghunath Das has fled to Puri, to be with Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Ten of our best men should immediately go to catch him and bring him back. Undoubtedly, he is travelling with Shivananda Sen, for he is in charge of the devotees' pilgrimage to Puri." In this way, Govardhan wrote a letter to Shivananda Sen, asking him to "please return my son." This letter was sent with the ten men.

But Shivananda replied that Raghunath Das had never joined him and his pilgrims, which was of course true, and the ten guards thus returned empty-handed. Raghunath's mother and father were overtaken with grief. Where could they turn? Should they send their guards to far away Jagannath Puri? Perhaps Raghunath Das never went to Puri. Perhaps he was hurt. Perhaps he needed them.

Meanwhile, Raghunath Das had left the barn in which he had spent the night and proceeded to travel for twelve days before finally arriving in Puri. It is said that, due to scarcity of food in the jungle and his fixed meditation on the Lord, Raghunath Das only managed to eat three meals in those twelve days. This instilled in him the sense of austerity for which he would later become famous. As one biographer writes: "The body fasted but the spirit feasted on the joy of the prospect of meeting the Master—Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu."¹⁸

Finally arriving in Puri, Raghunath Das approached Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who was sitting with His intimate devotees, headed by Shri Swarup Damodar. When Shri Chaitanya saw Raghunath Das, He immediately asked him to come closer, just as Nityananda Prabhu had done. But before the words had even emanated from His mouth, Raghunath Das clasped the lotus feet of Shri Chaitanya in a mood of spiritual love. With this, Shri Chaitanya stood up and embraced Raghunath Das out of His causeless mercy.

Then Shri Chaitanya turned to His able servant, Shri Swarup Damodar, and said, "My dear Swarup, I entrust this Raghunath Das to you. Please accept him as your son or servant. From this day forward, this Raghunath should be known as the Raghu of Swarup Damodar."¹⁹ As Swarupa Damodar's servant, he was considered the assistant secretary to Shri Chaitanya (Swarup was the secretary). Thus fully accepting Raghunath Das into His fold, Shri Chaitanya blessed him and showed him special mercy. All the devotees, struck with wonder, praised Raghunath Das Goswami's good fortune.

Under the care of Shri Swarup Damodar, Raghunath Das daily received the coveted remnants of Shri Chaitanya's food, and he lovingly relished them with full transcendental delight. Having been touched by God, this food was spiritually potent, and thus it brought Raghunath Das to even greater heights of spiritual ecstasy. For five days he accepted these remnants, but on the sixth day he stopped, feeling unworthy, and he began to beg alms while standing at the main gate of the Jagannath temple.

When asked why he preferred the simple morsels of food from the Jagannath temple to the nicely prepared remnants of Shri Chaitanya, he replied, "For me, this food was too opulent. My spiritual vision becomes blurred by such indulgence. Therefore, I prefer to take a few humble grains just to keep body and soul together." Shri Chaitanya was pleased with Raghunath Das' sense of austerity and openly praised him for it.

His humility, too, was pleasing to Shri Chaitanya, although at times it reached controversial proportions. For instance, Raghunath Das felt himself so fallen that, for a few years, he would not directly approach Shri Chaitanya. Rather, he would convey his ideas, whenever necessary, through the agency of Govinda (Shri Chaitanya's servant) or through his master, Swarup Damodar. However, he gradually felt the need to approach Shri Chaitanya directly, and he asked Swarup Damodar's permission to do so.

Upon hearing of Raghunath's request, Shri Chaitanya called Raghunath Das into his room and spoke to him as follows: "Swarup Damodar can in-

struct you better than I. Nonetheless, if you wish to hear from Me, you may ascertain your duties from My following statement: 'Do not talk like materialistic people or hear what they say. You should not eat very palatable food, nor should you unnecessarily dress according to fashion. Do not expect honor, but offer all respect to others. Always chant the holy name of Lord Krishna, and within your mind render service to Radha and Krishna in Vrindavan.' These are My instructions in a nutshell. Shri Swarup Damodar will give you specifics and details."²⁰ In this way, Shri Chaitanya encouraged Raghunath Das in his mood of asceticism and in his surrender to Swarup Damodar.

As the pleasant summer months ushered in, it was again time for the Ratha-yatra festival. Devotees came from all over Bengal, and Raghunath Das was in great bliss meeting these intimate associates of the Lord. Among the devotees to arrive was Shivananda Sen, who told Raghunath Das about the ten guards that were sent by his father. Raghunath Das felt for his grieving relatives but was convinced of his resolve. Not wanting to return home, he asked Shivananda to console his parents upon his return to Bengal, their mutual home.

After four months, Shivananda and the other devotees made their way back. Hearing of their return to Bengal, Govardhan sent one of his men to inquire about Raghunath Das. "Did you meet Raghu at Jagannath Puri?" asked Govardhan's messenger, "Was he there with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu?"

Shivananda Sen replied: "Yes. Raghunath Das is an intimate servitor of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and in this he has achieved great fame. Ever-

yone knows him. He was put under the charge of Swarup Damodar and he chants the holy name of Krishna day and night. He has become the life of all the devotees.

“He is completely renounced,” Shivananda continued, “he does not care about eating or dressing. He takes some grains from the Jagannath temple, and if no one offers him this in charity, he fasts. He is totally dedicated to the service of the Lord.” After hearing this, the messenger returned to Govardhan Majumdar.

Explaining all of the details to Raghunath's father and mother, the messenger could see their anguish. Nonetheless, they had by now understood that they could not change their son's mind. Rather, they decided to send some men with amenities for his comfort. They wanted to begin by sending four hundred coins, two servants, and one *brahmana* (priestly) cook to Shivananda Sen, who was to deliver these when he again returned to Puri.

As usual, the next year Shivananda Sen did go to Puri, and he brought the gifts from Raghunath Das' parents. At first, Raghunath Das did not touch these treasures, for he saw them as obstacles on the spiritual path. He gradually relented, however, but he only took enough to entertain Shri Chaitanya for two days out of every month. For two years, he continued to accept the gifts for Shri Chaitanya's service and then he abruptly stopped.

After not being invited by Raghunath Das for two months, Mahaprabhu questioned Swarup Damodar. Together, they concluded that Raghunath Das was thinking in the following way: “When one eats food offered by a materialist, one's mind becomes

contaminated, and one is unable to purely think of Krishna. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has accepted my invitations for the last two years out of His causeless mercy. But He would prefer that I give up all connections with wealth and worldly minded people.”²¹ It was confirmed that this was, indeed, the thinking of Raghunath Das Goswami.

Feeling that Raghunath Das had fully understood His teaching and, further, appreciating Raghunath's severe sense of renunciation, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu awarded him a small stone from the sacred Govardhan Hill and a garland of small conchshells from Vrindavan. (The actual stone from Govardhan Hill can presently be found in Vrindavan's Shri Shri Radha Gokulananda Temple.)

These items were incalculably precious to Shri Chaitanya—He had kept them close to His person continuously for three years. The devotees were astonished when He presented these items to Raghunath Das Goswami and they could thus understand that the Goswami was no ordinary soul. In fact, Raghunath's deep level of Krishna consciousness is revealed in the *Chaitanya-charitamrita*:

*sade sat prahara yaya kirtan-smarane
ahar-nidra chari danda seha nahe kona dine*

“Raghunath Das spent more than twenty-two hours out of every twenty-four chanting the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* and remembering the lotus feet of the Lord. He ate and slept for less than an hour and a half, and, indeed, on some days even this was compromised.”²²

His austerities increased with the years, and soon he gave up almost all food and drink, living on only a few drops of buttermilk every day. Astonished that he was able to maintain his life in this way, devotees came from miles around just to see the great Raghunath Das.

When he saw them approaching, however, he would humbly *offer his obeisances to them*. And as a result, it is said that he daily offered respects to two thousand devotees. In addition, he daily offered one thousand obeisances to the Lord and chanted at least one hundred thousand holy names. No one could understand the depth or level of his Krishna consciousness.

Due to his intense austerities, he became a great mystic and was known throughout much of India. Sages travelled great distances to get his association; scholars came from many important centers of learning merely to inquire about scriptural interpretation; and spiritual seekers came from far off places to study under him.

Raghunath Das had stayed in Puri for some sixteen years when, in 1534, Shri Chaitanya departed this mortal world. Shortly before departing, Shri Chaitanya had asked him to go to Vrindavan and work closely with Rupa and Sanatan, who were already there compiling academic studies of Chaitanyite Vaishnavism, unearthing important holy places, and constructing massive temples.

Nonetheless, he remained in Puri for two or three more years, until the demise of Swarup Damodar, his beloved spiritual master.²³ After this time, when he was almost forty years old, Raghunath Das left for Vrindavan to assist Rupa and Sanatan in their

service, as was requested by Shri Chaitanya. However, he was so crushed by the untimely death of his two masters that he decided to take his own life by jumping from Govardhan Hill.²⁴

Shri Rupa and Sanatan would not let him attempt suicide. Rather, since he had had intimate association with Shri Chaitanya, they convinced him to go on living and daily recite the pastimes of the Lord, which he did for three hours every day for the rest of his life. In this way, Rupa and Sanatan used to regularly hear from Raghunath Das about Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Thus, among Vaishnava devotees of the Lord, Raghunath Das' name is inseparably associated with that of Rupa and Sanatan, for they had become intimate friends and continued to serve together in Vrindavan until their last days.

While Rupa and Sanatan spent most of their time in Vrindavan proper, Raghunath Das went to the town of Govardhan, also in Vraj, and there he meditated near the beautiful lake today known as Radha-kund (an important Vrindavan holy place unearthed by Shri Chaitanya Himself). In due course, Radha-kund became well-known among Vaishnavas as the mystical dwelling of Raghunath Das Goswami, or "Das Goswami," as he came to be called, and this is where he eventually settled down to live in a small hut.

He did not always have a hut, however, for when he first arrived he merely sat down and became absorbed in meditation on the Divine Couple, Shri Shri Radha and Krishna. The popular story of Das Goswami's initial stay near Radha-kund, without any protection, is now immortalized. *Bhakti-ratna-kara* relates the episode: Once, while the Goswami

was absorbed in meditation, a tiger and tigress came and started to drink water from Shyam-kund, which is right next to Radha-kund. Although Das Goswami was himself unconcerned about the ferocious tigers, Lord Krishna descended and kept guard in the vicinity, for He did not want the Goswami to be disturbed in meditation and, further, He did not want to see the Goswami's life at risk. At that time, Sanatan Goswami happened along and saw all that was transpiring. After the two tigers and Lord Krishna had both left, Shri Sanatan approached Das Goswami, insisting that he build a hut so the Lord would not have to personally come for his protection. But Das Goswami was only concerned with his meditation, and he did not take Sanatan's advice very seriously.

As time passed, however, a similar incident occurred, one which Raghunath Das could not ignore. As he sat absorbed in meditation, the devotees became worried for his life as he spent hour after hour, not moving, in the blazing midday sun. At that time, it is said, Radharani Herself came to that spot, standing behind Her great devotee Raghu, and She used Her covering cloth to shield him from the hot rays of the sun. In due course, Sanatan Goswami again happened upon the scene and noticed that Shrimati Radharani was perspiring while trying to protect Her faithful devotee. Her clothes were fully drenched in Her transcendental sweat while She performed the loving austerity on behalf of Raghunath Das. Turning to Sanatan, Shrimati Radharani smiled and then left.

Taking it as his solemn duty, Sanatan Goswami went directly to Raghunath Das and chas-

tised him for causing this unnecessary inconvenience to the Lord's Divine Consort. It was after this incident that Das Goswami constructed a small cottage, just so Radhika, in Her love for him, would not have to take the trouble of sheltering him from the intense heat of the direct sunshine. This, in fact, was the beginning of the *kutir* system, wherein *sadhus* would have little huts built for them in which they could pursue their lengthy meditations.

The supernatural pastimes of Shri Raghunath Das Goswami at Radha-kund have become almost legendary, and each episode is pregnant with spiritual instruction. The above stories, for example, are meant to illustrate Das Goswami's lack of concern for his own material well-being and his concomitant absorption in Krishna consciousness. Moreover, these stories show that both Radha and Krishna felt indebted by the devotion of Raghunath Das Goswami. Finally, it shows Das Goswami's special concern for Shri Radhika.

Another famous pastime at Radha-kund involves Das Goswami's concern for the sanctity of the lake itself. Disturbed that devotees had to wash their clothes and pots in her holy waters, Raghunath Das decided to dig a well for these purposes. But while the devotees were digging, they hit something that started to bleed. Raghunath Das, fearing that he had committed some offense, insisted that the workers stop their digging. That night, it was revealed to Das Goswami that the workers had hit "the tongue of Govardhan," and the Goswami erected a shrine in its honor that is still worshiped to this day.

His standard of enhanced spirituality and renunciation developed more and more, culminating in

complete celestial absorption. Raghunath Das Goswami showed, by word and deed, that the capabilities of the body could be extended by the desire of the soul. He transcended his bodily necessities to the point where they were no longer an obstacle in his spiritual life. From this great saint, then, we may learn the valuable lesson of sensual control, not for a show of physical prowess, but for the ultimate end of love of God.

Today, at Radha-kund, stands Das Goswami's *samadhi*, his burial place, and pilgrims from all over the world go to pay homage to this greatest among spiritual teachers. His words are still recited by spiritual visionaries, as they were compiled by his immediate followers. In his own lifetime, Raghunath Das composed deeply profound verses, in both poetry and prose, concerning the intimate pastimes of Radha and Krishna. These were compiled into three volumes, the *Stava-mala* (or *Stavamali*), *Dana-charita* (or *Dana-keli-chintamani*), and *Mukta-charita*. But beyond his literary achievements, he is best remembered as the very emblem of renunciation. The *Chaitanya-charitamrita* confirms: "Raghunath Das Goswami was totally uninterested in material enjoyment...even from his childhood."²⁵ It is no wonder, therefore, that he is known as the *prayojan acharya*, or "he who teaches by his own example about the ultimate goal of life."

Notes

1. There is no accurate information regarding the dates of the appearance and ascension of the Six Goswamis. There are various theories, however, and

throughout the body of this work we will use the dates given by Bhaktivinode Thakur in his journal *Sajjana-toshani*, Vol. 2, p. 25, 1882. The Bengali article was entitled "*Chaya Goswamira Sambandhe Abda Nirnaya*." It should be noted that Bhaktivinode himself admits that these dates are merely an approximation, for while referring to them in the above article he says *iha sangata bodha hoy na* ("It may not be entirely accurate...").

Govardhana Das, in his mammoth historical study (in Bengali) entitled *Shri Shri Vraja Dham O Shri Goswami Gana* (Calcutta, Pancanan Cattopadhyaya, 1961 reprint, p. 383, footnote) also admits that "dates of the Goswamis tend to vary according to the opinions of various important authorities."

2. Raghunath Das is an incarnation of Rasa Manjari. Some say that he is an incarnation of Rati Manjari (also known as 'Tulasi'). Still others say that he is an incarnation of Bhanu-mati Manjari. See Shrila Kavi Karnapur, *Shri Gaura-ganoddesh-dipika*, trans., Kushakratha Dasa (Los Angeles, The Krishna Library, No. 11, 1987), p. 113.

3. Their manifestation as the Six Goswamis is also an eternal truth and exists in the celestial Navadvip-dham.

4. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Antya-lila* 2, ch. 6, p. 203. Also see *Madhya-lila* 6, ch. 16, text 223, p. 271.

5. Bhakti Pradip Tirtha, op. cit., p. 279.

6. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Mañjya-lila* 6, ch. 16, p.159.
7. Ibid., *Antya-lila* 2, ch. 6, texts 24-30, pp. 215-18.
8. Nityananda Prabhu, being an Incarnation of Balaram, Krishna's elder brother, is considered a direct manifestation of Godhead.
9. Dinesh Chandra Sen, *Chaitanya and His Companions* (Calcutta, University of Calcutta, 1917), p. 131.
10. This tree (*ficus religiosa*) is still there, in Panihati, beside the Ganges, and it is a popular place of pilgrimage.
11. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Antya-lila* 2, ch. 6, text 47, p. 225.
12. Ibid., text 51, p. 227.
13. Ibid., text 128, p. 259.
14. Ibid., texts 135-140, pp. 263-5.
15. Ibid., text 137, p. 263.
16. Ibid., text 142, p. 266.
17. Ibid., texts 38-40, pp. 221-2.
18. Dinesh Chandra Sen, op. cit., p. 137.

19. It is significant that Shri Chaitanya gave charge of Raghunath Das to Swarup Damodar, who was one of His four most intimate servitors, the other three being Ramananda Raya, Shiki Mahiti, and Madhavi-devi. In having Raghunath Das trained by one of His best, Shri Chaitanya was making a statement about the importance of Raghunath Das Goswami.

20. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Antya-lila* 2, ch. 6, texts 235-38, pp. 309-10.

21. Ibid., texts 278-80, pp. 329-30.

22. Ibid., text 310, p. 344.

23. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Adi-lila* 2, ch. 10, text 93, p. 313. Also see Charles R. Brooks, *Hare Krishnas In India* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 51-52.

24. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, Ibid., text 94, p. 314.

25. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 6, ch. 16, text 222, p. 270.

2/ Gopal Bhatta Goswami

Before writing *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, Shrila Krishnadas Kaviraj asked all the senior devotees of Vrindavan for their blessings. Naturally, Shri Gopal Bhatta Goswami (1503-1578) was one of these devotees. However, Gopal Bhatta specifically requested Shrila Krishnadas Kaviraj that in exchange for his blessings he not use his name in *Chaitanya-charitamrita*. As a result of this humility, Gopal Bhatta's name is mentioned in only one or two passages of that great work,¹ and little else about him is known. Biographical information is still available, however, in the *Bhakti-ratnakara*, and much can be gleaned, too, by studying the life of Shri Chaitanya.

According to Krishnadas Kaviraj's *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, Shri Chaitanya began His walking journey throughout South India in the summer of 1510. After many days, He came to Shri Rangam, a small city located on the banks of the Kaveri River in the district of Tanjore (about ten miles west of Kumbhakonam). Famous as one of the most important centers of Krishna worship in all of India, it is more accurately a center for the worship of Lakshmi and Narayana, an expansion of the divine couple Radha and Krishna. Nonetheless, Shri Rangam's main temple is the largest Vishnu (Narayana) temple in all of India, and pilgrims come from hundreds of miles to see Ranganath Swami, the Deity of Narayana in the main sanctum.

It was here that Shri Chaitanya met Vyenkata Bhatta and his brothers, Prabodhananda Saraswati² and Tirumalla Bhatta. These were *brahmanas* of vast learning, and they welcomed Shri Chaitanya, the travelling *sannyasi* mendicant, to be a guest in their home.³ At this time, too, Shri Chaitanya met Vyenkata's seven year old boy, Gopal Bhatta,⁴ who would one day be known as Gopal Bhatta Goswami.

The three brothers and young Gopal Bhatta lived near the Ranganath temple and, consequently, as *brahmanas*, were dedicated servants of the Deity. This being the case, they were naturally aligned with the Shri (Ramanuja) *sampradaya*, one of the four authentic lineages of disciplic descent.⁵ As such, they favored the *aishvarya* feature of the Lord, worshipping His grandeur and majesty.

In fact, their sincere devotion to the awe-inspiring and opulent Lakshmi-Narayana manifestation of the Supreme was so pure that Shri Chaitanya

felt great satisfaction for them (*prabhura tushta haila mana*)⁶, even though He was teaching the worship of Radha and Krishna. Despite being pleased with their high level of devotion, Shri Chaitanya could not help promoting the original Vedic perspective of Shri Krishna's supreme and original position. Consequently, He once jokingly said to Vyenkata Bhatta: "Your worshipable Goddess of Fortune, Lakshmi, always remains at the chest of Narayana, and She is certainly the most chaste woman in creation. However, My Lord is Lord Shri Krishna, a cowherd boy who is engaged in tending cows.

"Why is it" Shri Chaitanya continued, "that Lakshmi, being such a chaste wife, wants to associate with My Lord? Just to associate with Krishna, Lakshmi abandoned all transcendental happiness in Vaikuntha [the kingdom of God] and for a long time accepted vows and regulative principles and actually performed unlimited austerities."⁷

Vyenkata Bhatta countered by saying that Krishna and Narayana are in actuality one and the same, and it is thus natural that Lakshmi would approach Krishna. After all, Krishna is simply Narayana in another dress. What was the harm if she approached Her husband in one of His other manifestations? It is still, in essence, the same person. In this way, Her action cannot be considered unchaste. Vyenkata did admit, however, that Krishna represented a superior manifestation. "Although there is in one sense no difference between the forms of Narayana and Krishna," said Vyenkata, "in Krishna there is a special transcendental attraction due to the conjugal *rasa* ("relationship"), and consequently He surpasses Narayana."⁸

Shri Chaitanya replied: "I know that there is no fault on the part of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Fortune, but still She could not enter into the *rasa* dance. This was reserved only for Krishna's most intimate devotees. We hear this from revealed scriptures."⁹

Vyenkata Bhatta, now slightly vexed, said: "I cannot understand why Lakshmi was not allowed to join in the *rasa* dance. I am an ordinary human being. Since my intelligence is very limited and I am easily agitated, my mind cannot enter within the deep ocean of the pastimes of the Lord."¹⁰

Next, Vyenkata acknowledged the divinity of Shri Chaitanya and then asked Him to reveal the mystery of Lakshmi's inability to enter into the *rasa* dance. After all, he (Vyenkata Bhatta), as an ordinary living entity, may be subject to misinformation or faulty interpretation, but Shri Chaitanya, he knew, was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and, as such, had access to all information regarding these esoteric subjects.

Shri Chaitanya replied: "Lord Krishna has a specific characteristic. He attracts everyone's heart by sweet interpersonal relationships of conjugal love. These sweet relationships reach their zenith in Vraj, the highest level of God's kingdom, and there they may manifest in any of the primary *rasas*, such as that of servitude, friendship, parental expression, or, at last, conjugal love. At that point, Krishna's Godhood becomes unimportant, and an incomparably sweet exchange ensues.

"Only those who follow in the footsteps of these inhabitants of Vraja," Shri Chaitanya continued, "attain the Lord in His highest and original fea-

ture. There He is known as Vrajendra-nandana, or 'the son of Maharaj Nanda.' And there He is conquered by the spontaneous love of His most intimate servitors. The highest of these are the *gopis* [Krishna's cowherd girlfriends], whose superlative love for Krishna is totally unconditional and unmotivated. In order to enter the *rasa* dance, one must follow in their footsteps.

"The Goddess of Fortune," Shri Chaitanya concluded, "wanted to enjoy Krishna's association and at the same time retain Her spiritual body in the form of Lakshmi. This form is certainly magnificent from the spiritual point of view, with all of the opulence and power of godly majesty. However, She did not follow in the footsteps of the *gopis* in Her worship of Krishna. Consequently, all of the opulence and power in the world could not gain Her entrance into Krishna's most esoteric pastime."¹¹

In this way, Shri Chaitanya succeeded in showing Vyenkata Bhatta the superiority of love over power, of sweetness over opulence, of Krishna over Narayana. It was these conversations that won not only Vyenkata Bhatta and his two brothers over to Chaitanyite Vaishnavism, but they also won over the young Gopal Bhatta Goswami, who would regularly sit and listen to these talks. Thus, in order to gain some perspective on Gopal Bhatta's reaction to Shri Chaitanya's dialogue with his father, it would be useful to more deeply penetrate the underlying scriptural understanding of just why the Lord's *aishvarya* ("majestic") feature is subservient to His *madhurya* ("loving") feature.

According to Vedic tradition, the inhabitants of Vraja are uninterested in Krishna's majestic form,

His *aishvarya-rupa*. This form is reserved for worshipers such as those at Shri Rangam, who worship the Vishnu (Narayana) feature. If they attain perfection, they go to one of the unlimited Vaikuntha planets after death and worship the Lord of their heart with awe and reverence, for they are inclined to this mode of worship.

But awe and reverence are strange words to the inhabitants of Vraja. They are confidential lovers of the Lord, sharing a special exchange that is devoid of the distance created by formality and rigidity. Their destination is the celestial Vraja, where God's *madhurya-rupa*—Krishna, the Divine Lover—sports with them in a variety of intimate relationships. The intimacy is so intense that they forget His Lordship and in this way relish an even deeper relationship with Him. The *aishvarya* feature is thus understood to be inferior because it emphasizes the Lord's majestic and distant Godhood. His sweet character and personal attributes lose meaning. Conversely, in the Lord's *madhurya-rupa*, personal loving exchange comes to the fore. His Godhood loses meaning.

There are hints of these thoughts throughout the Vedic literature. For example, in the tenth canto of *Shrimad Bhagavatam* a scene is depicted wherein baby Krishna's foster mother, Yashoda, suspected Him of eating mud. As she peered into His mouth in order to see if He had indeed eaten it, she saw the entire universe. Her heart was seized with terror. Losing all composure, her natural motherly affection was replaced first with fear and then with awe and reverence, for she realized the divinity of her very special child. Nonetheless, Krishna almost immediately enabled her to forget the experi-

ence and once again relish Him as her ordinary son. Upon receiving Krishna's mercy in this way, the *Bhagavatam* explains, Mother Yashoda's heart was again filled with intense affection.

Another example is found in the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita*., where Arjuna says to Krishna: "I desire to see Your majestic feature (*ai-shvarya-rupa*)." Shri Krishna grants Arjuna's wish by showing him the Universal form. Upon seeing this manifestation of Krishna, however, Arjuna trembles with fear. He is overtaken by grief and any friendship he once felt for Krishna leaves him. After he begged Krishna to return to His more human-like form, and Krishna complied, Arjuna again felt his mood of intimate friendship with Krishna and was able to resume his relationship. In this episode, too, after showing His Universal form, Krishna manifested His mighty Narayana feature as a segue to His original form. Even this, however, did not satisfy Arjuna. Only when Krishna finally returned to the primeval two-armed, threefold bending form—Krishna as Shyamasundar—did Arjuna feel pacified enough to again relish his relationship with Him.

Observing these two incidents from *Shrimad Bhagavatam* and *Bhagavad-gita*, David L. Haberman, author and professor of religion at William's College, writes:

What makes emotional relationships with Godhead possible is the concealment of the awesome form by the gentle human form. This is the distinctive characteristic of the relationships between Krishna and the highest of the exemplary models, the inhabitants

of Vraja. Krishna appears to them in a sweet, lovely, and infinitely approachable human form called the *madhurya-rupa*, the form most conducive to attraction and love. This quality of Krishna leads to a closeness devoid of any hesitation.¹²

Haberman, then, would concur with Shri Chaitanya and Vyenkata Bhatta, when they agree that the *madhurya* feature far surpasses the *aishvarya*. Haberman's closing words in this regard are as follows:

The revelation of the majestic form (*aishvarya-rupa*) took away the possibility of an intimate emotional relationship, whereupon its concealment within the sweet human form (*madhurya-rupa*) enabled affection to return. The Gaudiya Vaishnavas developed the distinction of the two forms to a doctrinal level and proceeded to analyze the various exemplary figures presented in the *Bhagavat-purana* according to their awareness of these forms. Those who were aware only of the sweet human form of Krishna tended to see him as their very own (*mamata*) and were thus able to establish a closer relationship with him.¹³

Of course, Haberman's thesis, which expounds on Raganuga Bhakti Sadhana, the path of following in the footsteps of the inhabitants of Vraj, was originally detailed by Rupa Goswami, and this will be more elaborately addressed in the following

chapter. But for now it must at least be mentioned that this sense of *sadhana* (“procedure”) is very advanced and, as a more fundamental form of *sadhana*, Rupa Goswami recommended Vaidhi Bhakti Sadhana, in which one follows the rules and regulations of scripture under the direction of a bona-fide spiritual master. Then, upon receiving the blessings of the *guru*, one may proceed to actively follow in the footsteps of Vraj devotees and develop spontaneous (*raganuga*) love for God. The step-by-step procedure was recommended and detailed by the Six Goswamis. If one prematurely adheres to Raganuga Bhakti Sadhana, however, one risks imminent fall-down from the spiritual path.

Shri Chaitanya had thus explained to Vyenkata Bhatta about Lakshmi's inability to enter the *rasa* dance, for although She may be considered extremely advanced in spiritual life, She was unable to follow in the footsteps of the *gopis*, who are situated in the most advanced spiritual position. This may also serve as a warning to those who attempt to prematurely imitate the *gopis*, such as the Prakrita-sahajiyas [“cheap imitators”]. If even Lakshmi Herself is unable to enter these pastimes, the common man had better seriously consider the path of Vaidhi Bhakti Sadhana. Certainly this is a safer conclusion than jumping immediately to Raganuga Bhakti. In Goswami theology, this cannot be stressed enough: One should gradually work one's way up—through Vaidhi Bhakti Sadhana—to following in the footsteps of the Vraj devotees. Of course, it may be that one immediately or naturally has the *lolyam* (“spiritual 'greed'”) to take to the spontaneous *raganuga* path, especially since, ultimately, this particular path is

not “dependent” on any previous qualification. But such a thing is rare, and, in this age, it is more likely to be exploited than anything else. Whatever the case may be, as the *lila* (“pastime”) expressed by Shri Chaitanya unfolded, Lakshmi was not ready to follow in the holy footsteps of the Vraj *gopis*.

Using this logical and scriptural foundation, Shri Chaitanya convinced Vyenkata that the Krishna conception was superior to that of Narayana, and after becoming convinced, he, his two brothers, and young Gopal Bhatta made a commitment to become Gaudiya (Chaitanyite) Vaishnavas.

After discussing these subjects with Vyenkata Bhatta for the four months of the rainy season (*Chaturmasya*), and allowing young Gopal Bhatta to serve Him the whole time He was there,¹⁴ Shri Chaitanya decided to proceed on His tour of South India. When they heard that He was leaving, Vyenkata Bhatta fainted out of separation and young Gopal cried with tears of love. Just to pacify Gopal Bhatta, Shri Chaitanya agreed to stay for a few more days.

During this time, Gopal Bhatta had a dream, although it was more like a spiritual vision. Propelled by an intense desire to see Shri Chaitanya before He started to practice the severe austerities of a renunciant, to see Him in His pre-*sannyasi* days, Gopal Bhatta was fortunate enough to visualize the entire Navadvip experience and, by Shri Chaitanya's mercy, *actually enter into it* as a participant.¹⁵ In this “dream,” too, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu revealed to Gopal Bhatta that He was in fact nondifferent from Shyamasundar, also known as Vrajendra-nandana, the original two-armed form of Krishna, playing on His flute. He revealed this truth to Gopal Bhatta by

appearing in this two-armed Krishna form and then transforming Himself back into His own form as Shri Chaitanya.¹⁶

In this same dream-like state, Gopal Bhatta was instructed by Shri Chaitanya: "You will meet two jewel-like persons, Rupa and Sanatan. I have given them My mentality (*mano-vritti*)¹⁷ in order to publish My teachings. But by your disciples, especially, these teachings will spread to every town and village."¹⁸

Upon awakening, Gopal Bhatta went directly to Shri Chaitanya, to serve Him, but at that time Shri Chaitanya gave him the following instructions: "For now, stay here and serve your mother and father. After they have departed this world, you may go to Vrindavan and join Rupa and Sanatan."¹⁹ Always engage yourself in hearing and chanting the glories of Krishna." With these words, Shri Chaitanya left Shri Rangam. Young Gopal Bhatta never forgot these personal instructions or the spiritual dream in which Shri Chaitanya so kindly allowed him entrance into Navadvip-*lila* and revealed His divinity.

As he grew in years, Gopal Bhatta accepted his uncle, Prabodhananda Saraswati, as his spiritual master. From him, Gopal Bhatta learned poetry, rhetoric, Sanskrit grammar, and Vedanta. Remembrance of Shri Chaitanya, however, was the central driving force in his life, and he was thus able to defeat all opposing views to the theistic conclusions of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas. The *Bhakti-ratnakara* describes that with the combined assets he acquired from Prabodhananda Saraswati's vast learning and the inspirational memory of Shri Chaitanya's example and instructions, Gopal Bhatta became well-known for

his advanced knowledge and devotion.²⁰ As his reputation reached unprecedented proportions, he decided that he was ready to fulfill the mandate given to him by Shri Chaitanya: he was ready to go to Vrindavan. When Gopal Bhatta finally went to that holiest of lands, he was greeted with great love by Rupa and Sanatan.

Meanwhile, in Jagannath Puri, Shri Chaitanya became curious as to whether the now famous Gopal Bhatta had ever arrived in Vrindavan. Local legends and rumors were traveling fast, but Mahaprabhu wanted confirmation. So He sent a letter from His headquarters in Puri to Rupa and Sanatan, who were already in Vrindavan, and He asked them if Gopal Bhatta had indeed arrived.

A messenger soon came to Puri with Rupa and Sanatan's response. "Yes, he is here! All the residents of Vrindavan, such as Lokanath, Bhugarba, Kashishwar Pandit, Paramananda, and Krishнадas, are getting great pleasure from Gopal Bhatta, who is telling of Your stay in Shri Rangam and Your travels throughout the south. We accept Gopal Bhatta as our own brother, for as soon as he arrived in Vrindavan he thoroughly adopted the life of a renounced mendicant."²¹

In that same letter, Rupa described a dream in which his Deity of Govindadev had actually requested that Gopal Bhatta Goswami be His *pujari* ("priest").²² Vrindavan tradition asserts that Gopal Bhatta may have indeed served the Govindadev Deity for some time, but it is known that he eventually began worship of his own Deity, which he named Shri Radha-Raman. Further, he eventually had a magnificent temple built in the Deity's honor. This

temple, the Radha-Raman *mandir*, is now considered one of the most important Gaudiya Vaishnava temples outside of Bengal. However, at the time that Rupa and Sanatan's letter arrived in Puri, the Radha-Raman Deity (and temple) had not yet been founded. For the sake of the biographical narrative, then, the story behind this Deity and temple will be disclosed later.

When Shri Chaitanya received the letter from Rupa and Sanatan, He happily shared its contents with the devotees at Puri, such as Nityananda Prabhu, Adwaita Acharya, Haridas Thakur, and Gadadhar Pandit. He began to elaborate on the good qualities of Gopal Bhatta Goswami and told them of His four month with Gopal Bhatta's family in Shri Ranganam.

Overwhelmed with joy, Shri Chaitanya immediately dispatched a messenger with a letter for Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis. Along with this letter, He sent a package for Gopal Bhatta, which included His loincloth and other personal articles. Traditionally, such items are considered worshipable by devotees. One item in particular—a small black wooden seat, measuring about twelve inches in height and ten inches in width, used by Shri Chaitanya Himself—is still noticeably worshiped at the Shri Radha-Raman temple.²³

But when that first letter and package arrived in Vrindavan, all of the sadhus, especially Rupa and Sanatan, became ecstatic. Gopal Bhatta was deeply grateful that Shri Chaitanya had sent His cloth, and he treasured the sacred paraphernalia for the remaining portion of his life. Further, as Shri Rupa Goswami read the letter, he found specific instructions for

Gopal Bhatta—“Do not become dependent upon security or adopt a permanent residence. Please spend most of your time assisting Rupa and Sanatan in compiling transcendental literature, and thoroughly study this literature as well.”

These instructions he took to heart, and he soon wrote a book entitled *Sat-kriya-sara-dipika*, a classic on the tenets of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Then he edited the *Hari-bhakti-vilas*, which was written by Sanatan Goswami. In addition, he wrote a scholarly introduction to Jiva Goswami's *Sat-sandarbha* and a commentary on Bilvamangal Thakur's *Krishna-karnamrita*.²⁴

Since his most important contribution to the literature of Gaudiya Vaishnavism served to define the rites and rituals of gradual spiritual progress, a brief survey of these particular works is in order. *Sat-kriya-sara-dipika*, which roughly translates as “The Lamp that Lights the Essence of Spiritual Rituals,” deals primarily with married life. It delineates with great care the ten *samskaras*, or holy rites, from marriage, impregnation, and hair-cutting ceremony, to the beginning of learning and the study of scriptures. With this work, Gopal Bhatta Goswami sought to help the common people by giving them valuable guidance on marriage and the gradual pursuance of spiritual life, both for themselves and their offspring.

Next, he compiled a work called *Samskara Dipika*, which elucidates on the rules of behavior and conduct for *sannyasis*, or renunciants. It gives details that explain Vaishnava *sannyasi* names and the scripturally-based rituals with which one can officially adopt the life of a traveling mendicant. Both the *Sat-kriya-sara-dipika* and the *Samskara Dipika* elaborate

on fire sacrifice and initiation as originally taught in the Vedic tradition.

Of course, his most important work, the *Hari-bhakti-vilas*, is generally attributed to Sanatan Goswami, at least in its original form. It is said that Gopal Bhatta later produced a shortened version and added to it the *Dig-darshini-tika*, which is the commentary of Sanatan Goswami. Some say that the original plan for the *Hari-bhakti-vilas* came from Gopal Bhatta, but was started by Sanatan Goswami anyway. Because of this confusion, actual authorship is controversial. Nonetheless, the mammoth work is inevitably associated with both their names.²⁵

The historical evidence in regard to authorship is admittedly confused. On Shri Gopal Bhatta's side, the *Hari-Bhakti-vilas* itself states that he wrote it for the satisfaction of Raghunath Das, Rupa and Sanatan. But in the writings of Jiva Goswami and Krishnadas Kaviraj, authorship is unequivocally given to Sanatan. Narahari Chakravarti writes in his *Bhakti-ratnakara* that Sanatan actually wrote the *Hari-bhakti-vilas* but attributed the work to his younger contemporary. Nonetheless, Gopal Bhatta Goswami's name in the text itself cannot be ignored.

Consequently, modern Vaishnava historians have naturally concluded that the work was a collaboration. Shriman Manohardas, in his *Anuragavalli*, also says that Sanatan wrote the original treatise, but that Gopal Bhatta must have written the illustrative passages (i.e., the quotes from scriptures). Some historians suggest that Sanatan wanted his *smriti* to be respected by the orthodox *brahmanas*, and since some of them frowned upon him because of his association with Muslims (Indeed, Sanatan himself

would not enter the Jagannath temple for similar reasons!), he allowed the book to be “published” by Gopal Bhatta, who was from a pukka South Indian Vaishnava family. Whether or not the above is what actually transpired, the orthodox view has come to accept a collaboration of sorts. According to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, “The subject matter of *Hari-bhakti-vilas*, by Sanatan Goswami, was collected by Shрила Gopal Bhatta Goswami and is known as a Vaishnava *Smriti*.”²⁶

The *Hari-bhakti-vilas* is known as Vaishnava *Smriti*, and as such it plays an important role in the study and practice of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Composed of twenty chapters, each called a *vilas*, the book takes one through all of the pitfalls and dangers on the path of Bhakti. With a scientific, step-by-step analysis, the reader accompanies Gopal Bhatta as he takes them through basic rules and regulations to the highest levels of Vaishnava etiquette. It should be noted, however, that the *Hari-bhakti-vilas* is primarily for India,²⁷ and adjustments can be made according to time, place, and circumstance. Still, such adjustments should only be made by an empowered *acharya* in disciplic succession. This is the verdict of Gopal Bhatta Goswami.

Living his life as an embodiment of the scriptures, Gopal Bhatta's fame spread through all of India and he became known as the younger brother of Rupa and Sanatan. In Vrindavan, his reputation as a master in the process of Bhakti became especially prominent after a trip to the Gandaki River in Nepal. There, he procured twelve *shilas* (stones that are considered sacred incarnations of Krishna) and brought them back to Vrindavan. The trip to Nepal and back

was arduous, as in those days it meant traveling by foot, but Gopal Bhatta was undaunted. Upon arriving in Vrindavan, however, he felt unqualified to worship his sacred stones. And so he again journeyed back to the Gandaki in Nepal.

Carefully placing the *shilas* in the holy river while chanting the appropriate *mantras*, the sacred stones spontaneously jumped back into his hands. Trying three or four times to leave them in the river, he found that he was not able to do so, for the same mystical phenomenon occurred again and again. He took this as a sign from Krishna that he was to take them back to Vrindavan and worship them. This he did, and he soon became known in Vrindavan as the Goswami who worshiped twelve unique *shilas*. He carried them at all times in a cloth bag that hung from his neck.

In 1542, eight years after the disappearance of Shri Chaitanya, Gopal Bhatta felt the need to worship a Deity much like Rupa Goswami's Govindaji Deity. This need became especially poignant when a wealthy merchant gave him jewelry, ornaments, and fine cloth for the worship of the Lord. Because *shilas* do not have a human-like form, Gopal Bhatta considered that these ornaments could not properly be used in Their worship. Therefore, he placed all these items before his *shilas* and fervently prayed for proper direction, which, at least on that particular evening, was not granted to him.

The next morning, however, he found that one of the *shilas*, known as the Damodar *shila*, had transformed into an incomparably beautiful Deity of Krishna, just as he had desired. Overcome with happiness, he fell to the ground in all humility and began

to offer humble prayers and profound eulogies. Hearing of the miraculous event, Rupa, Sanatan, and many other senior Vaishnavas hurried to the sacred spot where Gopal Bhatta was offering salutations of love.²⁸ They were all there when he named the Deity: Shri Radha-Ramanadev. Local tradition asserts that the Deity was given this name (which refers to "Krishna, who brings pleasure to Radharani") because the area where the Deity appeared is near that of the *rasa* dance, where Krishna increased Radharani's attachment and love for Him by running away.

This Radha-Raman Deity is worshiped in the same place today, although the modern Radha-Raman Temple in Vrindavan now boasts an impressive enclosure that was eventually built just outside the northern wall of Nidhivan. The original structure of the temple has been refurbished many times, the latest being completed in 1826 by Shah Kundan Lal and his brother Shah Phundan.²⁹ Although Shri Radha-Ramanadev Himself is not more than twelve inches in height, pilgrims still come from all parts of India just to see His staggering beauty. In fact, His tiny size is part of His special beauty. Moreover, of all the original Goswami Deities, only Radha-Raman is still in Vrindavan. This, too, is attributable to the Deity's size: the temple guardians concluded that the Muslim soldiers, who were destroying all of the "Hindu idols," would fortunately overlook Radha-Ramanadev, because He was very small in size. The well-wishers of the Deity were correct, and the Muslims never destroyed the original Deity. Curiously, there is no Deity of Radharani

in the temple, but at Radha-Raman's left side there is a small silver crown to acknowledge Her presence.

Once, several years after Radha-Ramanadev first appeared to Gopal Bhatta, the Bhatta was worshipping his Deity and became overwhelmed with longing for Shri Chaitanya, feeling intensely the mood of love in separation. Remembering that he had at one time promised his father that he would worship Shri Chaitanya, he began to feel a lack of chastity in worshipping his Radha-Raman Deity. After all, although the Deity was, in one sense, non-different from Shri Chaitanya, it was still a manifestation of "Krishna," playing on His flute.

As soon as Gopal Bhatta Goswami started to feel these emotions, the Deity manifested His feature as Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.³⁰ Gopal Bhatta's tears of love began to flow like the River Ganga as he realized, once again, Shri Chaitanya's identity as Krishna, now in the form of Radha-Ramanadev. This is a realization that he perpetually cherished and shared with others.

Gopal Bhatta Goswami came to be accepted as one of the great authorities on Chaitanyite Vaishnavism, and he initiated into the order such luminaries as Shrinivas Acharya and Gopinath Pujari,³¹ the latter serving as head priest for the Radha-Raman temple as his life's mission. Wanting his family to care for the Radha-Raman Deity for all of posterity, however, he had to deal with a serious problem: he was a lifelong celibate! Gopal Bhatta Goswami resolved the problem by requesting Gopinath's younger brother, Shri Damodar Das to marry and create progeny. The line of Radha-Raman servants, from this family, is still continuing unbroken.

It was soon discovered that Gopal Bhatta Goswami was an incarnation of Ananga Manjari, the divine younger sister of Radharani, although sometimes it is said that he was an incarnation of Guna Manjari.³² His intense study and elaborate knowledge of scripture acquired for him a reputation as one of the most important religious scholars in India, while his love and devotion for Shri Chaitanya and Radha-Ramanadeva has catapulted him to the status of a saint. He is now remembered as one of the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan, and to this day reverential followers commemorate his exemplary life by regularly visiting his tomb (*samadhi*) at the Radha-Raman *mandir*.

Notes

1. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Adi-lila* 2, ch. 10, text 105, p. 319, purport.

2. There is an inaccurate tradition, beginning with a questionable book called *Adwaita Prakash*, which claims that Shri Prabodhananda Saraswati is actually the same person as the impersonalist philosopher known as Prakashananda Saraswati, who Shri Chaitanya would later meet in Benares. The best scholarship, from S.K. De (op. cit., p. 133) to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 7, ch. 17, text 104, p. 56, purport), has conclusively ascertained that Prabodhananda Saraswati and Prakashananda Saraswati are two different individuals.

3. Their house has since been transformed into "Shri Jagannath Mutt," a temple dedicated to the worship of Jagannath, Baladev, and Subhadra. Tradition holds that the Deities in this temple were hand carved by Shri Chaitanya Himself as He felt intense separation from the Jagannath Deities in Puri. One can today visit this temple and witness the mystical beauty of these Deities.

The last surviving descendant of the Vyenkata Bhatta family is known as Ranga Raj Bhatta. He is the head priest in Shri Rangam as this book is being written.

4. Vaishnava scholar Madhusudan Goswami gives different dates for the appearance and ascension of Gopal Bhatta Goswami. In his Hindi work entitled *Shri Radha-Raman Prakatya*, he says that the dates are 1500-1585. Most Gaudiya Vaishnavas accept both possibilities.

5. According to the Vedic tradition, there are four different genuine lines of disciplic descent. If one wants authentic spiritual knowledge, one must align oneself with one of these *sampradayas*. Vyenkata Bhatta was aligned with the Shri-Ramanujite *sampradaya*, which is authentic, and Shri Chaitanya was aligned with the Brahma-Madhva *sampradaya*, which is also authentic.

6. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 3, ch. 9, text 109, p. 351.

7. *Ibid.*, texts 111-65. I am taking the liberty of paraphrasing the remaining segments of Vyenkata's

conversation with Shri Chaitanya. This will enable me to maintain the style of the narrative without becoming too beleaguered by philosophical jargon.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. David L. Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation: A Study of Raganuga Bhakti Sadhana* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 46.

13. Ibid., p. 47.

14. *Bhakti-ratnakara*, op. cit., texts 126-7, p. 7.

15. Ibid., texts 108-20, p. 7.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., text 122, p. 7.

18. Gopal Bhatta Goswami initiated Shrinivas Acharya, who was perhaps one of the most important figures in seventeenth-century Vaishnavism. Together with Narottam Das Thakur and Shyamananda Pandit, he helped spread the message of the Goswamis (especially their writings) to many parts of India.

19. Scholars have created a controversy over Shri Chaitanya's instruction to Gopal Bhatta. How could the Master tell Gopal Bhatta to go to Vrindavan and meet Rupa and Sanatan if He Himself had not yet met the two saintly brothers and given them the instructions to go to Vrindavan? The chronology appears to be incorrect.

S.K. De (op. cit., p. 126) and Edward Dimock (op. cit., pp. 76-7) are concerned about this apparent disparity, but Shri Chaitanya had corresponded with Rupa and Sanatan long before He actually met them. He could have easily already planned to send them to Vrindavan and was preparing Gopal Bhatta for his future meeting with them. In addition, if Shri Chaitanya is accepted as the dual Incarnation of Radha and Krishna, then His concomitant omniscience would explain the apparent problem in chronology.

20. *Bhakti-ratnakara*, op. cit., texts 147-8, p. 8.

21. Ibid., texts 178-84, p. 9.

22. Ibid., texts texts 189-200, p. 9.

23. R.K. Das, *Temples of Vrindaban* (New Delhi, Sundeep Prakashan, 1990), pp. 96-7.

24. See Dhruva Maharaj Das, *Vrindavan Dham Ki Jai!* (San Francisco, Entourage Publications, 1988), p. 51.

25. For the most exhaustive treatment of this controversy please note the debate between S.K. De and

Amarnath Ray in *Indian Culture* (Volume V, July 1938, pp. 57-71, and October 1938, pp. 199-206).

26. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 1, ch. 1, text 35, p. 20, purport.

27. Ibid., op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 9, ch. 23, text 105, p. 64, purport.

28. *Bhakti-ratnakara*, op. cit., Fourth Wave, texts 312-26, p. 86.

29. Miles Davis, *Vraja Mandala Darshana: Touring the Land of Krishna* (El Cerrito, CA., International Institute of Indology, 1984), p. 54.

30. *Bhakti-ratnakar*, op. cit., text 345, p. 87.

31. Dhruva Maharaja Das, op. cit.

32. *Shri Gaura-ganoddasha-dipika*, op. cit., text 184, p. 112.

3/ Rupa Goswami

According to tradition, Kumardev and Revatidevi had one daughter and five sons.¹ Of these children, Sanatan, Rupa (1489-1564), and Ballabha were known as pure devotees. Their prestigious Saraswati *Brahman* ancestry had originally hailed from Karnataka, in South India, but Kumardev moved to Baklachandradvip (modern Barisal), near Ramasharai, in the Jessore district of East Bengal. This is where the three pious boys were raised. Scholars assert that Rupa and Sanatan were known in those days as Amara and San-

tosh, ² respectively. The names “Rupa” and “Sanatan” were given to them much later by Shri Chaitanya.

When they first met the Master, Rupa and Sanatan were working for the Muslim occupational government of Bengal under Nawab Hussein Shah, the then Emperor of Gauda.³ At that time, they were given the Persian titles Dabir Khas (“private secretary”) and Sakara Malik (“revenue officer”),⁴ and they enjoyed great wealth and prestige as political leaders in a growing regime.

Nonetheless, they were avid students of scripture and never forgot the lotus feet of the Lord.⁵ They were renowned throughout India for their vast learning and intense devotion, even *before* they met Shri Chaitanya.⁶ Rupa had already written several books on Vedic philosophy, including his now famous *Hamsa-dutta*, and Sanatan used to regularly recite *Shrimad Bhagavatam*, with tears of ecstasy, for all who would listen. Thus, an obvious question arises: Why would these two spiritually-minded brothers invest any of their valuable time in a mundane political career?

According to the *Bhakti-ratnakara*, they were conscripted into their governmental duties by Nawab Hussein Shah, who threatened them with physical expulsion as well as the murder of pious devotees.⁷ He had heard how much Rupa and Sanatan were loved by the common people and how they were known as *raj-a-shishya* (“the kings of learning”)⁸ due to their unprecedented proficiency in all scriptural knowledge. “If I could coerce them into my service,” the Nawab reasoned, “then I could more successfully win the support of the mass of people.”

To this end, the Nawab threatened to wreak havoc in the brahminical community. Fully confident

that the power-hungry Nawab would indeed carry out his nefarious plan, Dabir Khas and Sakara Malik were virtually blackmailed into working under his Muslim rule. It is specifically described that because they had “fear of the uncivilized ruler” (*mleccha-bhaya*),⁹ they complied with his wishes.

It should be understood, however, that their fear was not self-motivated. *Bhakti-ratnakara* clearly asserts that they were more concerned about the Nawab's threat of causing harm to the society of Vaishnavas.¹⁰ If they disobeyed, the repercussions would be horrendous. Consequently, they were forced to accept service under Hussein Shah. The Nawab, delighted by this conquest, bestowed great riches upon the two brothers as they dutifully performed their service.

Kumardev, their father, prayed for them, but deep within he knew that they were great devotees and that Krishna must have some plan. Dabir Khas and Sakara Malik themselves were concerned about their newfound occupations, and they corresponded with Shri Chaitanya, hoping that He would one day give them His association and that He might, perhaps, be able to resolve their dilemma.

Temporarily resigning themselves to their fate, they settled in Ramakeli, a village some eighteen miles southeast of Malda (in the Rajshahi district of northern Bengal). There they used their vast wealth to construct a replica of Shri Krishna's abode—a “Hidden (*gupta*) Vrindavan”—complete with elaborate bathing places and constant readings about the pastimes of the Lord.¹¹ In this way, they sought to alleviate their “sentence” of governmental employment.

As they studied and conveyed the scriptures to their Muslim colleagues, the two brothers became pro-

ficient in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, as well as in other local dialects. It is said that they studied Sanskrit under the renowned Sarvananda Vidya-Vachaspati (Sarva-bhauma Bhattacharya's brother)¹² and that their knowledge of Arabic and Persian was acquired with the help of Syed Fakir-ud-Din, a reputed scholar and land-owner in Saptagram.¹³ In this way, they spent their time in Ramakeli while externally (if also competently) carrying out state affairs.

Once, when Shri Chaitanya decided to go to Vrindavan (in 1514), He stopped at Ramakeli specifically to meet Dabir Khas and Sakara Malik. By this time, He was accompanied by thousands of followers, who were all chanting and dancing with Him. Hearing that He had arrived, the two brothers made plans to see Him. Being Muslim officials, they decided to go in the dead of night in order to remain unnoticed.¹⁴

Passing through the throngs of dedicated devotees, they first met Nityananda Prabhu and Haridas Thakur, who immediately let Shri Chaitanya know of their arrival. The Master was overjoyed upon seeing His two eternal associates, and they, in turn, were overjoyed to see Him.

As a symbol of their humility, both brothers took bunches of straw and placed them between their teeth. Falling at Shri Chaitanya's lotus feet, they cried with boundless joy. They were finally reunited with their Lord and savior, and they knew that He would now put an end to their predicament with Hussain Shah.

Getting up from the ground, Dabir Khas and Sakara Malik (their younger brother Ballabha was there as well) offered sincere prayers to Shri Chaitanya: "All glories to Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu! You

are the most merciful savior of fallen souls. All glories to Your supreme personality!

“We belong to the lowest class of men,” they continued, “and our associates and employment are of the lowest type. Therefore we feel it strange to introduce ourselves to You. We are ashamed, for You are so pure. Dear Lord, let us assure You that no one is more sinful than us, nor is there any offender like us. Since You have specifically incarnated to deliver the fallen souls, please consider that there are none so fallen as the two of us, for we are worse than Jagai and Madhai.”¹⁵ In this way, the two brothers humbly presented themselves before Shri Chaitanya.

When they compared themselves to Jagai and Madhai, two of the most sinful recipients of the Lord's mercy, Shri Chaitanya spoke to them: “You two brothers are my eternal servants. From this day, your names will be changed to Shri Rupa and Shri Sanatan. Now please abandon your humility, for My heart is breaking to see you so humble.” Shri Chaitanya thus initiated His two greatest followers into the path of Gaudiya Vaishnavism.

He continued: “You have written several letters showing your humility. I can understand your real level of advancement from those letters. Incidentally, I really had no business in Ramakeli—I have come here specifically for the two of you.” Assuring Rupa and Sanatan that their worldly engagement in the government of Hussein Shah would soon be coming to an end, he advised them to go home and to not worry about their future. Now that they had indeed surrendered, their future was in Krishna's hands.

“Birth after birth,” Shri Chaitanya said, “you have been My eternal servants. I am sure that Krishna

will deliver you very soon.”¹⁶ The Master then placed His two hands on their heads. Feeling humbled by this gesture, they bowed before Him and placed His feet, not His hands, on their heads. After this, Shri Chaitanya embraced them and requested all of the devotees to shower their blessings upon them.

Before leaving, Rupa and Sanatan expressed concern that Shri Chaitanya might continue on the road to Vrindavan. They cautioned Him that Hussein Shah, while respectful, was nonetheless concerned with his own political power and might cause harm to a powerful preacher of religion such as Shri Chaitanya, especially if he were to discover that his two best men would soon be leaving his service in favor of this preacher.

Seeing that this argument did not deter Shri Chaitanya, they reminded Him that it is improper etiquette for a *sannyasi* to travel to a holy place such as Vrindavan with a large retinue. This final consideration was enough to sway Him, and Shri Chaitanya soon returned to Puri. Of course, after several months, the Master again attempted to go to Vrindavan and He arrived there without incident.

Shri Rupa Goswami and his younger brother, Ballabha (who Shri Chaitanya named “Anupama”), were able to renounce the world at this time and live as travelling mendicants. Sanatan Goswami, on the other hand, was still bound by previous commitments within the Nawab's administration. He therefore was not able to leave his official post at the same time as his enthusiastic younger brothers.

Travelling to Prayag (present-day Allahabad), Rupa and Anupama met Shri Chaitanya once again, for they were spreading His message in that district and

He was now returning to Puri from His successful pilgrimage to Vrindavan. Taking advantage of the auspicious meeting, He instructed the two brothers for ten days regarding *krishna-tattva*, the ultimate truth about Shri Krishna; *bhakti-tattva*, the truth about devotion to Krishna; and *rasa-tattva*, the truth about transcendental loving relationships with Krishna.

As they approached Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, once again with superlative humility, they offered a memorable prayer:

*namo maha-vadanyaya, krishna prema pradaya te
krishnaya-krishna-chaitanya, namne gaur-tvishe
namaha*

“O most munificent incarnation of the Lord! You are Krishna Himself appearing as Shri Chaitanya. You have assumed the golden color of Radharani, and you are freely distributing what no other incarnation has ever distributed—pure love of God.”

Being pleased with this prayer, Shri Chaitanya began to instruct Rupa and Anupama: “The ocean of spiritual relationships in regard to devotional service is so great that it is impossible to describe it completely. No one can estimate the length and breadth of this ocean. But just to help you appreciate its incalculable dimensions, I will share with you one drop.” He then proceeded to describe the nature of the soul with exacting detail, supporting His statements with references from the Vedic literatures.

Shri Chaitanya explained that the dimension of the spirit soul is very, very minute: one ten-thousandth the size of the tip of a hair. These infinitesimal living entities are unlimited in number and are of two types: moving and nonmoving. The moving entities

are divided into human and nonhuman species, and the human species are further divided into civilized and uncivilized cultures. Those who follow spiritual principles, particularly as enunciated in Vedic culture, are counted as civilized. And among these there are many who are merely superficial practitioners.

Among the serious followers of spiritual culture, the majority are mostly interested in personal salvation at best (if they are not interested in downright materialistic pursuits that are merely candy-coated with spiritual flavor). Of these, Shri Chaitanya pointed out, it is a rare person indeed who is progressive enough to sincerely inquire into (and pursue) the ultimate goal of life. Out of many millions of such spiritually mature individuals, one may actually attain genuine salvation. And out of millions of these especially fortunate souls, very few ever reach the level of pure devotion.

Shri Chaitanya chose to elaborate on this very important point: As the unlimited living beings wander throughout the multifarious material universes, lifetime after lifetime in different species, they pursue a never-ending quest for peace and happiness. At times they enjoy heavenly pleasures, and sometimes they suffer hellish miseries. If, however, a soul becomes one of the fortunate few, getting the opportunity to associate with a bona-fide spiritual master (a pure devotee in disciplic succession), he at that time receives the coveted *bhakti-lata-bija*, or the seed of pure devotional service (which is then firmly rooted in his heart).

Rupa and Anupama were relishing these explanations, and so the Master elucidated further: Such a fortunate person, said Shri Chaitanya, must carefully tend the seed of devotion like a competent gardener. He must water it regularly with hearing and chanting

about the glories of Shri Krishna. Gradually, the holy seed sprouts and the creeper of devotional service grows and grows, piercing the walls of our conditioned universe, catapulting such a person into the spiritual world.

When the soul who embodies the creeper of devotion finally arrives at Goloka Vrindavan, the highest abode of Shri Krishna, it produces abundant quantities of *prema-phala*, the fruits of divine love. These eternal gifts support the entire cosmic manifestation and are the only true pleasure-giving items, both for the living entity and for the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Rupa and Anupama were next warned that the candidate for pure devotional service, while cultivating the creeper of devotion, must be careful not to commit offenses to the Vaishnavas. Such offenses are compared to a mad elephant that uproots the devotional creeper, causing it to suffocate and die. The spiritual gardener must learn to protect his devotional creeper from the mad-elephant offense.

Shri Chaitanya elaborated upon another possible danger on the path of devotion: Weeds of material desires may grow alongside the devotional creeper. The subtle and gross varieties of such weeds are unlimited, and the gardener must be careful not to nourish them while watering his devotional creeper. As Rupa Goswami and Anupama listened to this “devotional creeper” analogy, their own spiritual understanding seemed to blossom.

Shri Chaitanya also used a “sugar” analogy to further explain the progressive levels of *prema*, unalloyed love of God. First comes the seed of the sugarcane and then the sugarcane plant. From the plant,

one can extract the sweet juice of the sugarcane. When this juice is boiled, it becomes liquid molasses and, when cooked more, it becomes solid molasses. This molasses then becomes sugar and, finally, rock candy. In this way sugar gradually develops from a crude state to one that is refined. Similarly, love of God evolves through carefully delineated stages, each more concentrated than the last.

Scientifically elaborating upon every one of these stages, using complex Sanskrit terminology, Shri Chaitanya next explained to the two brothers how pure love culminates in self realization and how one begins to reestablish himself in his original relationship with Krishna. These relationships (*rasa-tattva*) exist in five primary forms: *shanta-rati*, neutral appreciation of the Lord; *dasya-rati*, attachment in servitude; *sakhya-rati*, attachment in friendship; *vatsalya-rati*, attachment in parental affection; and *madhurya-rati*, attachment in conjugal love. This *rasa* theory was later systematized by Rupa Goswami in *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu* and developed even further in *Ujjvala-nilamani*.

Shri Chaitanya next explained to Rupa and Anupama that attachment to Krishna is either in awe and reverence or in pure, spontaneous love. This discussion was similar in content to His conversations with Vyankata Bhatta, the father of Gopal Bhatta Goswami. Attachment in awe and reverence, He said, is found in all the spiritual planets throughout the kingdom of God.

However, there is one exception, and Shri Chaitanya was quick to point this out. That exception is in Goloka Vrindavan, the topmost spiritual planet. On other spiritual levels, the opulences of the Lord are prominent, and devotional service in neutrality and

servitude predominates. But in Goloka Vrindavan the prominent relationships with Shri Krishna are the fraternal, the parental, and the conjugal—intimate relationships that are actually impeded by feelings of awe and reverence. The devotees of Goloka experience the Lord's unlimited opulence, but they are not awed by it, because their emphasis is on a natural, spontaneous loving relationship with Krishna.

Each successive stage of love is symptomized by its having all the qualities of the preceding stages plus an increase in feelings of intimacy with the Lord. Servitude, for example, includes neutrality, and fraternal attachment includes elements of both neutrality and servitude. Unlike servitude and neutrality, however, fraternity is generally devoid of formality and veneration, at least on the more intimate levels. The same is true for parental and conjugal love.

Devotees situated in parental loving attachment, in addition to having sentiments of neutrality, servitude, and friendship, also may think of themselves as the Lord's maintainers. This in fact holds an especially sweet taste for Krishna as He allows His devotee to take an extremely responsible position. At this point, He trusts them unlimitedly, and he places Himself in their care without reservation.

All four relationships mentioned above culminate in the relationship of conjugal love. Here, fundamental attachment for Krishna, service to Him, the intimate feelings of fraternity, and the matured conception of maintenance all increase in intensity, and romantic love reigns supreme. The reader should be warned, however, that the "love" under discussion is not the type to which we are accustomed in the world of birth and death. Spiritual love as described by Shri

Chaitanya is devoid of carnality, superficiality, and impermanence—the hallmark qualities of “love” in the material sphere. By contrast, the conjugal *rasa* is completely spiritual, profoundly deep, and it is eternal. This level of divine love is so exalted that Shri Chaitanya told Rupa and Anupama that it cannot be fully described. Nonetheless, all three enjoyed great spiritual ecstasy as they touched upon this topic and, later, Shri Rupa was given the title “Rasacharya” to acknowledge his expertise in the area of *rasa* theology.

Shri Chaitanya thus concluded His instructions to Rupa and Anupama, saying: “I have simply given you a general overview of the truths of devotional service. You can consider how to adjust and expand upon this. When one thinks of Krishna constantly, love for Him is manifest within the heart. Even though one may be ignorant, by the mercy of Shri Krishna and His empowered representatives one can reach the shore of the ocean of spiritual love.”¹⁷

After these ten days together, Rupa and Anupama did not want to leave the Master's side. They accompanied Him as far as Benares and begged to proceed on to Puri. But Shri Chaitanya asked them to first visit Vrindavan and then later meet with Him in Puri after passing through Bengal. In obedience to their Master's request, the two brothers went to Vrindavan and, after a short stay, decided it was time to meet Him in Puri. On the way, Anupama departed this world. It was while traveling to Puri that Rupa Goswami first conceived of dramatic playwriting as a viable means to convey the pastimes of Krishna. Preparing a basic outline for such plays, he wrote a rough draft for a drama about Krishna's activities as a cowherd boy in Vrindavan and as a king in Dwaraka. Soon

after beginning this work, Rupa arrived in a village known as Satyabhamapur (in Orissa). That evening, he had a dream in which a beautiful woman appeared and asked him to write a separate play about her. The next morning he realized that she was Krishna's queen, Satyabhama, asking him to write two separate plays: one about the Lord's pastimes in Vrindavan and one about those in Dwaraka.

When Rupa Goswami finally reached Puri, he showed the basic outline for his two dramas to Shri Chaitanya, who reaffirmed that there is a vast difference between Krishna's Vrindavan pastimes and those at Dwaraka, and that it is proper to describe them in two different dramas. Vrindavan pastimes display the Lord's intimate *madhurya* feature, whereas the majestic Dwaraka pastimes are characteristic of His *aishvarya* feature. To combine them would be an inappropriate mixing of *rasas*.

Chaitanya-charitamrita describes the great delight of Shri Chaitanya and Ramananda Raya in reading the early drafts of Rupa Goswami's work. But it should be stated here that the books were not finished until years later. The Vrindavan pastimes were completed in 1532 and called *Vidagdha Madhava*.¹⁸ The Dwaraka episode of Krishna's life was completed in 1546 and was called *Lalita Madhava*.¹⁹ These two are today regarded by Gaudiya Vaishnavas as the most important dramatic literatures in the Sanskrit language.

Before describing the work of Rupa Goswami at length, it is significant to note that he stayed with Shri Chaitanya for ten months in Puri and received further instruction from Him on the science of Krishna consciousness.²⁰ Then, after hearing from Shri Chaitanya that he should go to the holy land of Vrindavan

and unearth the hidden holy places, establish prominent temples, and write books on the philosophy that He had taught him, Shri Rupa left to fulfill the mission of his Master.

Passing through Bengal, he was delayed for a full twelve months.²¹ Feeling that his renunciation of the world might inconvenience his family and relatives, Shri Rupa decided to divide his wealth among them and in this way give them a sense of security. In addition, he gave vast portions of his wealth to the brahminical community and temples of Bengal. The legalities must have taken time because it was not until a year later that he arrived in Vrindavan.

Although it has been the subject of controversy, it has been asserted that shortly after he arrived, Shri Rupa Goswami established a Deity of Vrindadevi, a goddess who "not only bore the town's name, but was considered an incarnate aspect of Krishna as well."²² In fact, Vrindadevi is known as the proprietor of Vrindavan and is an incarnation of a *gopi* from the *shakhi* category. Figuring prominently into Krishna's daily play (*ashra-kaliya-lila*) and the writings of the Six Goswamis, she is a very intimate associate of Krishna. Historian F.S. Growse states that the Deity was originally located at present-day Seva-kunj, near Vrindavan's center.²³ Tradition holds, however, that the Deity of Vrindadevi originally stood at the site that would later support the temple of Rupa Goswami's Govinda-dev Deity. Today, this Deity of Vrindadevi can be found at the Madan-mohan temple (not to be confused with the temple of Sanatan Goswami) in Kamyavan (western Vraja).²⁴

Carrying out Shri Chaitanya's desire was difficult at first, and Shri Rupa lamented his inability to do

so. Lokanath and Bhugarba were sent to Vrindavan much earlier, but they did not win a good deal of support. Thus, while sitting on the banks of the Yamuna River, Rupa thought about the difficult task that lay before him. Just then, a young boy approached and asked the reason for his despondency. He told the boy of his mission to revive Vrindavan as a Vaishnava place of pilgrimage and as a headquarters of the movement. Further, he informed the boy of his mission to build wonderful temples for the worship of Radha and Krishna, and to establish a scholastic and literary community for the production of a systematic theology.²⁵

After hearing Shri Rupa's elaborate explanation, the young boy gestured that he should follow him, and he led Shri Rupa to a small hill. "Inside," he told the Goswami, "is the magnificent Deity of Govindadev, established almost five thousand years earlier by Shri Krishna's great grandson Vajra. During one of the Muslim invasions, villagers had buried the Deity in this hill to prevent His destruction, but the Deity was subsequently lost.

"Every day," the boy continued, "a large cow comes by this place and showers her milk all over the hill. In this way, it seeps through and Govindadev relishes His daily meal." After describing this miraculous story to Shri Rupa Goswami, the young boy disappeared.²⁶ Somewhat skeptical, Rupa came to that same spot the next morning, just to see if a cow did arrive to shower its milk throughout the area. To his surprise, a cow in-deed came and the event transpired just as the young boy had told him. Excited, Rupa called several local villagers to excavate this site, for he was now convinced that the Govindadev Deity was buried there.

After great effort, they finally found the Deity and, under Rupa Goswami's direction, became enthusiastic to erect a temple and begin proper worship. The Vrindavanites were grateful that Rupa Goswami had initiated this search for Govindadev and soon became his staunch followers. Rupa then sent news to Puri that his mission in Vrindavan was underway, and after hearing of this Shri Chaitanya happily sent Kashishwar Pandit and others to assist him.

Under the patronage of the famed Emperor Akbar, a temple was soon constructed, although it was not completed until 1590 (as the temple inscription says) or as late as 1593,²⁷ some years after Rupa Goswami departed this world. The building of this temple, however, marked great success for the mission of Rupa Goswami, who even convinced the powerful Maharaja Man Singh of Amber (Jaipur) to donate huge quantities of red sandstone²⁸ and to eventually become a noteworthy disciple (although some say that he was actually a disciple of Raghunath Bhatta Goswami—but even in this regard there is a controversy). The devotees and their temples flourished during the many years of building the Govindadev temple.

Much later, in the early eighteenth century during a Muslim invasion led by the tyrant Aurangzeb, the temple was destroyed and the Deity, for protection, was moved to Jaipur (where He is presently being worshiped). Of the original seven-storey Govindadev temple, the upper storeys were completely obliterated. Only the huge, cruciform *mahamandap* remains intact. This remaining monument, however, has an elevation that is equal to several storeys in its own right, containing open arcades and a vaulted dome composed of intersecting, pointed arches.²⁹

In design, the Govindadev temple, with its accentuated angles and openings, has been glorified as an innovation in the field of temple architecture. Historians and experts in architectural development have described it as "the most interesting and elegant edifice that Hindu India has ever produced at least in Upper India and the only one perhaps from which a European architect might even borrow a few hints."³⁰

If Shri Rupa's temple was a testimony to his dedication and devotion, his literary activity was even more so. *Chaitanya-charitamrita* specifically mentions that Shri Chaitanya empowered the Goswami for this massive endeavor.³¹ Consequently, he compiled many huge volumes, of which sixteen are considered most important. In all, he wrote at least 100,000 verses!³² The more famous works include *Vidagdha Madhava*, *Lalita Madhava*, *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nilamani*, *Upadeshamrita*, *Dana-keli-kaumudhi*, and *Laghu Bhagavatamrita*. Several of these works are outlined as follows.

As stated earlier, his two dramas, *Vidagdha Madhava* and *Lalita Madhava*, deal with Krishna's pastimes in Vrindavan and Dwaraka, respectively. The inner guidelines and esoteric *rasas* for these dramas were divulged by Shri Chaitanya Himself when, at the house of Chandrashekhara Acharya, He acted in dramatic performances for the pleasure of the devotees.³³ These dramas have been detailed by Shri Chaitanya's authorized biographers and they served as inspirations for Rupa Goswami in the writing of his own dramas.

As stated, *Vidagdha Madhava* portrays the intimate pastimes of Radha and Krishna in Vrindavan. According to Rupa Goswami, the divine couple are assisted in their rendezvous by Purnamasi,

who acts throughout as a dedicated servant. The primary theme of the play centers around a fundamental concern that Radharani's husband might spirit Her away from Shri Krishna, thus creating a serious obstacle to their union. In addition, Chandravali tries to compete with Radharani for Krishna's affections. The drama thus enables one to experience the inner turbulence of an otherwise blissful conjugal *rasa*. It nonetheless reassures its audience of the ultimate victory that is quite inevitable in spiritual relationships. The entire play is complete in seven acts.³⁴

The *Lalita Madhava* has been briefly summarized by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada as follows:

Lalita Madhava is a description of Krishna's pastimes in Dwaraka. These pastimes were made into a drama, and the work was finished in the year 1459 Shakabda [1546 A.D.]. The first part deals with festivities in the evening, the second with the killing of the Shankha-chuda, the third with maddened Shrimati Radharani, the fourth with Radharani's proceeding toward Krishna, the fifth with the achievement of Chandravali, the sixth with the achievement of Lalita, the seventh with the meeting in Nava-Vrindavan, the eighth with the enjoyment in Nava-Vrindavan, the ninth with looking over pictures, and the tenth with complete satisfaction of the mind. Thus the entire drama is divided into ten parts.³⁵

In regard to these two dramas, *Chaitanya-charitamrita* says: "Shrila Rupa Goswami compiled two important dramas named *Vidagdha Madhava* and

Lalita Madhava, from which one can understand all the mellows derived from the pastimes of Lord Krishna.”³⁶ This is no small claim, but Gaudiya Vaishnavas from the time of the Six Goswamis to the present day implicitly accept that conclusion.

Perhaps even more important than these two dramas, however, are Rupa Goswami's *Bhakti-rasa-mrita-sindhu* and his *Ujjvala-nilamani*. About these, *Chaitanya-charitamrita* declares: “Shrila Rupa Goswami wrote many books, the most famous of which is *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu*. From that book one can understand the essence of devotional service to Krishna and the transcendental mellow one can derive from such service. Shrila Rupa Goswami also compiled an important book named *Ujjvala-nilamani*, from which one can understand, to the fullest limits, the loving affairs of Shri Shri Radha and Krishna.”³⁷ It is in these books that he develops his *Bhakti-rasa-shastra* for the benefit of all mankind.

In comparing these latter two works to the two dramas, David Haberman has this to say:

When we come to the *rasa* theory of Rupa Goswamin...we find ourselves in an entirely different context. For Rupa there is only one drama that can produce true *rasa*—the divine play of Krishna. When the analysis shifts to a single drama, which is held to be Ultimate Reality itself, significant changes result. The emphasis for Rupa is not on the ability of generic drama to lift one out of everyday experience; rather, he is deeply concerned with the means by which one may participate in the one Real Drama. For the true Gaudiya Vaishnava, salvation comes to be

defined as an eternal participation in this absolute drama.³⁸

Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu, indeed, is a scientific analysis of just *how* to participate in the eternal drama of spiritual life. In it, Rupa Goswami clearly defines the gradual development of *bhakti-rasa*, from the most practical stage of Vaidhi-bhakti-sadhana (following basic rules and regulations) to Raganuga-bhakti-sadhana, wherein one learns to follow in the footsteps of Shri Krishna's pure and transcendental associates—the inhabitants of the spiritual world (One follows in these footsteps with the express purpose of gaining entrance into the Divine Kingdom). This is again nicely articulated by Haberman:

To experience *bhakti-rasa*, the *bhakta* ["the devotee"] moves onto the stage of the drama which transforms the world. In Rupa's religious system, Krishna becomes the *bhakta's* dramatic partner; He is the hero (*nayaka*) of the ultimate play. The individual *bhakta* relates to him personally by dramatically taking a part in that play. The whole world, or at least all of Vraj (which, from the correct spiritual perspective, amounts to the same thing), becomes a stage on which to act out one's part; thus religion becomes drama and acting becomes a way of salvation. Rupa needed a dramatic theory to describe his religious system, and such a theory was readily available. Utilizing the components of Bharata's *rasa* theory, Rupa was able to express his interpretation of *bhakti* with added sophistication.³⁹

This is all true enough, but it should be pointed out here that just as the *rasa* theory did not originate with Shri Rupa, it did not originate with Bharata Muni either. Its origin is not, as some would have us believe, constricted to mere aesthetic theory or dramatic language. The concept of *rasa* is eternal, as is any aspect of the Absolute Truth, and it can be found in the earliest portions of the Vedic literature.

Taittiriya Upanishad (11.7), for example, emphatically declares: "*Raso vai saha*," showing that transcendental relationship (*rasa*) has always been an integral part of spiritual understanding. The best modern scholarship asserts that the *rasa* theory did not begin in Bharata's *Natya-shastra* and that it was never "specifically restricted to aesthetic experience. It has spiritual, metaphysical and metaphorical overtones."⁴⁰

Gradually, Bharata Muni incorporated these ideas into his *Natya-shastra* and, yes, it was eventually utilized by Rupa Goswami, at least in terms of basic terminology. Just as Bharata Muni describes twelve *rasas*—five primary and seven secondary—so, too, does Rupa Goswami.⁴¹ But this is as far as the comparison goes. The Goswami develops it into a complicated spiritual science, and this is reflected in his *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu*. At present, there is no good English edition of this work, but *The Nectar of Devotion* by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada is an excellent summary study.

Ujjvala-nilamani picks up where *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu* leaves off. The contents of this spiritual classic are briefly but eloquently summarized by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada:

There is also a book called *Ujjvala-nilamani*, a transcendental account of loving affairs that

includes metaphor, analogy, and other higher *bhakti* sentiments. Devotional service in conjugal love is described briefly in *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu*, but it is very elaborately discussed in *Ujjvala-nilamani*. This book describes different types of lovers, their assistants, and those who are very dear to Krishna. There is also a description of Shrimati Radharani and other female lovers, as well as various group leaders. Messengers and the constant associates, as well as others who are very dear to Krishna, are all described. The book also relates how love of Krishna is awakened and describes the ecstatic situation, the devotional situation, permanent ecstasy, disturbed ecstasy, steady ecstasy, different positions of different dresses, feelings of separation, prior attraction, anger in attraction, varieties of loving affairs, separation from the beloved, meeting with the beloved, and both direct and indirect enjoyment between the lover and the beloved. All of this has been very elaborately described.⁴²

In this, his most developed work, Rupa Goswami clearly articulates the various levels of divine love. *Madhurya-rati*, love of God, may in fact manifest in any of the five *rasas*, but it is especially developed in the conjugal *rasa*. It is consequently this particular relationship that is the focus of *Ujjvala-nilamani*. Briefly, the various levels of divine love are delineated as follows: After the rigors of Vaidhi-bhakti-sadhana and Raganuga-bhakti-sadhana, the heart is given to the Lord in full devotion and one becomes reinstated in one's eternal relationship with Him. This is *preman*, which is more clearly defined as the

matured bond of loving emotions (*bhava-bandana*) between man and God.

Experienced in various stages, *preman* may be fully developed (*praudha*), middling (*madhya*), or slight (*manda*). Each level leads to the next and culminates in *sneha*, which refers to a total melting of the heart. Just as one produces clarified butter (or *ghee*) by boiling out all of the impurities, *sneha* is that level where the heart melts like butter out of intense affection for Krishna.

After this comes *mana*, or the extremely advanced level wherein one may actually feel a sense of indignation from unfulfilled affection. This is a “love-trick” that Krishna plays on His devotees, invariably increasing their attachment for Him.

This leads to *pranaya*, a loving closeness in which one wishes to take Krishna into his exclusive confidence. No one else will do. Exclusive loving devotion to Krishna is clearly visible on this level and can lead to the highest platform of ecstasy.

From here one graduates to *raga*, or “full attachment,” and from there to *anuraga*, or “more refined attachment.” This, then, leads to *bhava*, or “total ecstasy.” Above this level is the exalted *maha-bhava*. But this esoteric position is mainly experienced by Radharani and the inner circle of *gopis*. This is unlimited love and is generally beyond the reach of a limited soul.

Of the five rasas—*shanta*, *dasya*, *sakhya vatsalya*, and *madhurya*—it is said that *shanta* can lead to *prema*; *dasya* up to *raga*; *sakhya* and *vatsalya* up to *anuraga*; and *madhurya* alone can lead to *maha-bhava*, the most perfect stage of love. *Madhurya* is further divided into *rudha* and *adhirudha*, of which the former is experienced by the wives of Krishna (*svakiya*), while the latter is experienced by the *gopis*

of Vraja, who are not married to Krishna (*parakiya*). Thus *adhirudha* is that highest manifestation of *mahabhava* and can only be experienced by personalities such as Radhika, Mahaprabhu, and perhaps several others of the inner circle.⁴³ In this way, *Ujjvala-nilamani* thoroughly outlines the science of *rasa* and the successive levels of divine love.⁴⁴

In fact, Rupa Goswami is so meticulous in his dissertation that a serious student of his work can come to know his own relationship with Krishna just by studying and practicing according to the Goswami's able direction. Rupa Goswami explains how one's original dominant feeling for Lord Krishna (*sthayi-bhava*) is "uncovered" or again raised to its state of relish by means of the appropriate "excitants" (*vibhavas*), "ensuants" (*anubhavas*), "bodily expressions" (*sattvika-bhavas*), and "auxiliary feeling" (*vyabhichari-* or *sanchari-bhavas*). What all this means, very simply, is that, as one becomes advanced in Krishna consciousness, one can recognize various signs that harken back to his original relationship with Krishna. For example, hearing about Krishna and the gopis themselves are the substantial excitants (*alambana vibhava*), while the sound of the flute and various other "external" paraphernalia are the enhancing excitants (*uddipana vibhava*). The ensuants (*anubhava*) may consist of certain sidelong glances and smiles, for instance, which bring back remembrance of Krishna, while the *sattvika-bhavas* generally refer to the eight bodily transformations, such as profuse crying and hair standing on end. The *vyabhichari-bhavas* include all emotions that enhance one's relationship with Krishna, the only exceptions being haughtiness (*ugrata*) and idleness (*alasya*).⁴⁵ Although this is only a brief overview, it should be noted that Rupa Goswami gave elaborate

details about one's relationship with Krishna and how one can uncover that relationship.

Rupa Goswami's insights into the deepest levels of Krishna consciousness should come as no surprise, for in addition to receiving the instruction of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and being empowered by Him to write transcendental literature, Rupa Goswami's spiritual identity reveals his unique ontological position. He is an incarnation of Rupa Manjari, one of the most intimate assistants in the loving affairs of Radha and Krishna.⁴⁶

But Rupa Manjari is particularly inclined to Shrimati Radharani. This is technically called *Radha-dasyam*, which reaches its zenith in *Manjari-bhav*, or *Bhavollasa-rati*—the culmination of selfless Gaudiya devotion (see *Afterword*). This is the stage of spirituality wherein one does not want for oneself but, rather, is interested in Radhika's pleasure, for only *She* can ultimately please Krishna.

In addition to stressing this point in his writings, Rupa Goswami illustrated its conclusions in a practical way, in his own life, especially when he lived in Vrindavan. One example of this can be found in *Bhakti-ratnakara* (Fifth Wave). According to that text, one day, as Rupa Goswami performed his *bhajan* (meditational worship) in the vicinity of Tero Kadamba (not far from Nandagram in the area of Vraj), he had the intense desire to get some milk and sugar and to prepare *khir* (a sweet milk drink) for his Govinda Deity. Then, he thought, he would offer this sacred food to his *guru* and elder brother, Sanatan Goswami. A few moments after Shri Rupa had begun thinking in this way, a beautiful young girl came to his place of *bhajan*, bringing him a nice quantity of milk and sugar. "Here," she said, "please prepare

some nice *khir* and offer it to your Deity.” After saying these words, she disappeared.

Rupa Goswami did just as she said, boiling the milk and sugar into a thick, condensed sweet drink. He offered it to his Deity and then gave the remnants to Sanatan for his enjoyment. In fact, as Shri Sanatan relished Rupa Goswami's preparation, he was overcome with symptoms of ecstasy. After some time, he was able to control himself, and then he asked Rupa just where he had gotten the ingredients for this particular preparation. When his brother told him the story of the beautiful young girl, Sanatan could understand that this was actually Radharani Herself, showering mercy on Rupa Goswami.

But because Shrimati Radharani was their object of devotion, and they were Her dedicated servants, the proper relationship of served and servitor had been disrupted, and the *Bhakti-ratnakar* makes careful record of this. The story ends with Sanatan telling Rupa never again to accept such gifts. In point of fact, this story serves to illustrate that Rupa and Sanatan are specifically the servants of Shrimati Radharani. And all who are “Rupanugas,” those who follow in the line of Rupa Goswami, must also come to see themselves as Her servants. Their prayer is as follows: “By offering Her betel nuts, by massaging Her feet, by bringing Her water, by arranging for Her secret meetings with Lord Krishna, and by performing many other services, many *gopi* maidservants affectionately please Shri Radha, the great queen of Vrindavan forest. When the divine couple enjoy their pastimes, these maidservants are not at all shy, even in the presence of the great *gopis* for whom Shri Radha is more dear than life. I take shelter of these *gopi*'s maidservants, who have Shrimati Rupa Manjari as their leader.” (*Vraja-vilas-stava* 38)

Notes

1. That Kumardev had five sons was illustrated in a genealogical table by Shri Haridas Das, *Shri Shri Gaudiya Vaishnava Abhidhan* (Navadvip, Haribol Kutir, 471 Chaitanyabda), p. 1248. The history of this *abhidhan* (or "dictionary") is interesting. It was a work originally begun by Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, one of the greatest authorities on Gaudiya Vaishnavism in the current age. However, he never completed the project. Instead, he gave his work to a young scholar named Haridas Das, who eventually completed and published the *abhidhan*.

The sister of Rupa Goswami is mentioned in *Chaitanya-charitamrita* (op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 8, ch. 20, text 38, p. 19).

2. Amara and Santosh are names that are sometimes ascribed to Rupa and Sanatan before their initiation by Shri Chaitanya. There is some scholarly evidence for this (see S.K. De, *Early History of the Vaishnava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, op. cit., p. 147). But it does not appear to be substantiated by early authoritative sources.

3. The Hussein Shahi dynasty derives its name from Alauddin Hussain Shah, ruler of Bengal from 1494 to 1519. [see Ainslie T. Embree, *Encyclopedia of Asian History*, Vol. 2 (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), p. 88.]

The Sultan Barbak Shah reigned earlier, perhaps from 1460 to 1470, and he was a liberal monarch. It is said that he allowed for a diversity of religious beliefs, much in the same way that Akbar would be tolerant of other religions many years later. Moreover, it has also been suggested in *Shri Shri Gaudiya*

Vaishnava Abhidhan (op. cit., p. 1397) that Rupa Goswami's grandfather, Mukunda Mishra, was a powerful leader in his regime.

Soon, however, Sultan Barbak's only son, Shams-ud-din Yussuf Shah (1476-81), came to power. Next, Yussuf's son, Sikandar Shah, ascended the throne. Unlike the qualified Barbak Shah who came before them, both of these men were inefficient as well as bigoted leaders. Insult was added to injury when Jalal-ud-din Fath Shah, also known as Hussein Shah, next ascended the throne. He was a tyrant and was opposed to the principles of religion. This is nicely explained in A.K. Majumdar, *Chaitanya: His Life and Doctrine* (Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969), pp. 84-5.

According to Bhaktivinode Thakur's *Nava-dvip Dham Mahatmya* (op. cit., p. 19), Hussein Shah is actually Jarasandha from Shri Krishna's pastimes and so he is in this way an eternal associate of the Lord. For more information on his political regime, see Momtazur Rahman Tarafdar, *Husain Shahi Bengal: A Socio-Political Study* (Dacca, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1965).

4. *Bhakti-ratnakara*, op. cit., First Wave, texts 581-85, p. 28. Also see Jadunatha Sinha, *Jiva Goswami's Religion of Devotion and Love*, op. cit., p. 4.

5. *Bhakti-ratnakara*, Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Adi-lila* 2, ch. 10, text 84, purport.

12. *Bhakti-ratnakara*, op. cit., First Wave, text 598, p. 29.

13. D.C. Sen, *The Vaishnava Literature of Medieval Bengal* (Calcutta, University of Calcutta, 1917), p. 29.

14. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 1, chapter one.

15. Ibid. Also see His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *The Golden Avatar: Teachings of Lord Chaitanya* (Los Angeles, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1974, reprint), pp. 22-41. Also see Kundali Das, "The Glories of Lord Chaitanya, Part 12: Instructions to Rupa Goswami," in *Back To Godhead*, Vol. 21, No. 1, January 1986, pp. 33-4.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. D.C. Sen, op. cit., p. 30.

19. Ibid.

20. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Antya-lila* 2, ch. 4, text 26, p. 13.

21. Ibid., text 214, p. 103.

22. Charles R. Brooks, *Hare Krishnas in India*, op. cit., p. 49.
23. F.S. Growse, *Mathura: A District Memoir* (New Delhi, Asian Educational Services, 1979, reprint), p. 61.
24. Dhruva Maharaja Das, *Vrindavan Dham Ki Jai!*, op. cit., p. 26.
25. Ibid., p. 56.
26. Ibid. It is sometimes said that a young woman approached him instead of a young boy. Other times it is said that it was all revealed to him in a dream.
27. Public Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, *Temples of North India*, Revised Edition (New Delhi, Government of India, 1968), pp. 20-21.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 1, ch. 1, text 73, p. 49.
32. Ibid., *Antya-lila* 2, ch. 4, text 226, p. 109.
33. Swami B.H. Bon, "Drama," in *Indian Philosophy and Culture* (U.P., India, Institute of Oriental Philosophy, December 1966), Vol. 12, No. 4, p. 8.

34. See Donna Wulff, *Drama as a Mode of Religious Realization: The Vidagdhamadhava of Rupa Goswami* (Chico, CA., Scholars Press, 1984)
35. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 1, ch. 1, text 41, purport.
36. Ibid., *Antya-lila* 2, ch. 4, text 225, p. 109.
37. Ibid., texts 223-4, pp. 108-9.
38. David L. Haberman, op. cit., pp. 35-6.
39. Ibid., p. 34.
40. K. Krishnamoorthy, "Chaitanya Bhakti-Rasa in Sanskrit" in V.N. Mishra, ed., *Follow the Notes of the Flute* (New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1987), p. 104.
41. Seven secondary *rasas* are: anger, wonder, comedy, chivalry, mercy, dread, and ghastliness.
42. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 1, ch. 1, text 41, p. 25, purport.
43. Manindra Mohan Bose, *The Post-Chaitanya Sahajia Cult of Bengal* (Delhi, Gian Publishing House, 1986), p.51.
44. For details in the English language see S.K. De, "The Bhakti-Rasa-Shastra of Bengal Vaishnavism" in *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No.4, December 1932, p. 682.

45. For a good English explanation see Sudhindra Chandra Chakravarti, *Philosophical Foundation of Bengal Vaishnavism* (Calcutta, Academic Publishers, 1969), pp. 252-3.

46. *Shri Gaura-ganoddeshā-dīpikā*, op. cit., text 180, p. 110.

4/ Sanatan Goswami

Sanatan Goswami (1488-1558) was the elder brother of Shri Rupa and Shri Anupama. From his earliest years, he was spontaneously attracted to logic, philosophy, rhetoric, and the theistic message of *Shrimad Bhagavatam*. In order to gain depth in his understanding of these subjects, he accepted instruction from such luminaries as Vidya Vachaspati, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, Paramananda Bhattacharya, and the learned Ramabhadra.¹

Although Sanatan, along with Rupa and Anupama, was forced to work for the Islamic occupational government in Bengal, he never gave up his studies or his religious way of life. He wrote a book called *Sadachar Paddhati*,² which was based upon ancient scriptural conclusions and contained rules and regulations for the gradual advancement of an aspiring spiritualist. In his own life, he scrupulously followed these instructions, and, as a householder in the Vedic system, he used to donate food to *brahmanas* ("priests"), destitute people, and lepers on a daily basis. His sense of charity was boundless.

One night, in a dream, a handsome renunciant came to Sanatan and warned him not to become distracted by worldly-mindedness. He ordered Sanatan to go to Vrindavan, unearth the obscured holy places, and preach the scriptural doctrine of divine love. The next morning, Sanatan told his brother, Rupa, about the dream. Smiling, Rupa confessed that he, too, was somehow aware of this instruction, and he informed Sanatan that Shri Krishna had indeed descended as Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to give them further direction in regard to their spiritual calling.³

With every day that passed, Rupa and Sanatan anxiously awaited a sign. When would they be able to renounce their distasteful political service to the Nawab of Bengal and fully replace it with service to the Lord's lotus feet? The boys consulted their mother and she suggested that they write a letter to Shri Chaitanya. This they did, and after receiving no reply, they tried writing Him again and again. At last, Shri Chaitanya responded, but His letter merely contained one verse from scripture: "If a woman is

involved with a man other than her husband, she may try to be especially diligent in her household duties. In this way she seeks to avoid detection. Within her heart, however, she is always longing to be reunited with her paramour."⁴

Rupa and Sanatan understood His meaning: They should continue to work responsibly for the Nawab, at least temporarily. Inwardly, they could fully meditate on their inevitable surrender unto the Lord's mission.

But the Goswamis had to be patient. Shri Chaitanya had just taken *sannyasa* and gone to Puri. Next, He began a pilgrimage that included a two year tour of South India. So it was some time before He would journey to North Bengal and meet them at Ramakeli. Nonetheless, the meeting, which took place in 1514, was a pivotal point in the annals of Gaudiya Vaishnava history (this has been described in the previous chapter).

After meeting Shri Chaitanya at Ramakeli, Rupa and Anupama were able to immediately renounce the world. Sanatan, however, had responsibilities to the Nawab, and it was difficult to extricate himself. In an attempt to fulfill his governmental obligations and pursue Krishna consciousness at the same time, Sanatan feigned illness, telling the Nawab that he had to remain at home until he got well.⁵ In this way, he daily studied *Shrimad Bhagavatam* with Ramakeli's chief pundits, and during this period learned scholars and devotees came from miles around to hear Sanatan's recitations of the *Bhagavatam*.

The Nawab became suspicious. Sending a physician to the home of Sanatan Goswami, he

found that not only was the Goswami not at all ill, but he had turned his home into a virtual *ashram*, with holy men and scriptural readings permeating the atmosphere. Enraged, the Nawab immediately called for Sanatan and demanded that he go with him to Orissa, where he expected to conquer another kingdom. When the Goswami refused to go with him, the Nawab had him temporarily thrown into jail.

Luckily, a letter arrived from Rupa Goswami informing Sanatan that Shri Chaitanya had departed for Vrindavan.⁶ Rupa and Anupama were going to meet Him, said the letter, and Rupa suggested that Sanatan make arrangements to come as well. Having heard that Sanatan had been imprisoned by the Nawab, Rupa concluded his letter by saying, "I have left a deposit of ten thousand gold coins in the *mudisthane* ['trading market']. Use that money to get out of prison. Somehow or other get yourself released and come to Vrindavan."

Sanatan then bribed the Muslim jailkeeper with seven thousand gold coins. Sensing that the jailkeeper was still hesitant to let him go, Sanatan resorted to almost comical diplomacy, claiming that he was only leaving jail to go to Mecca, the most important Islamic place of pilgrimage. He also argued that one who releases a conditioned soul from jail is himself released from conditioned life.⁷

When the jailkeeper began to acquiesce, Sanatan had to help him fabricate a story to tell his superiors. After all, the state officials would want to know how the prisoner had escaped. "Tell them that you took me to the Ganges so I could evacuate,"

Sanatan suggested, "and escaping your attention I jumped into the river." The jailkeeper agreed.

Although Sanatan was not accustomed to the sort of trickery he had to use on the Muslim jailkeeper, the situation was exceptional. Rupa Goswami had written to him that the Supreme Lord Shri Krishna Chaitanya would be receiving guests in Vrindavan and that Sanatan should go to see Him. In addition, Sanatan was initially thrown in prison for a negligible reason and the Nawab would soon release him upon his return. With these considerations, Sanatan planned to immediately free himself from prison and begin his journey to see Shri Chaitanya.

As an escapee, he was not able to walk along the main road, for he would surely be detected and thrown back in prison. Consequently, he and his servant, Ishan, walked day and night through dangerous forests until they finally reached a hilly tract of land known as Patada (in Bihar).⁸ Here, they stayed in a hotel, and when the hotel manager heard from his palmist that Ishan was secretly carrying eight gold coins, the hotel manager plotted to kill both Sanatan and his servant and steal their money.

Biding his time, the hotel manager treated them as honored guests, and even offered his assistance. Sensing that the hotel manager was too friendly, Sanatan had asked Ishan how much money he had with him. When Ishan said that he had seven gold coins (he lied in order to keep one gold coin for himself), Sanatan immediately took the money and voluntarily gave it to the hotel manager in order to prevent a violent attack upon their persons. Knowing that Ishan had lied about the one gold coin, Sanatan

let him keep it, but he released Ishan from his service.

These actions completely swayed the hotel owner from his previous intentions and he even assisted Sanatan in his journey through the Hazaribagh mountains and out of Patada. On the way, Sanatan stopped at Hajipur and met his brother-in-law, Shrikanta. After hearing about Sanatan's difficulties, Shrikanta became concerned about the Goswami and asked him to stay with him and his family. But the Goswami declined. His mission was of paramount importance, and he could never settle down to a compromised life of family and friends. This might be suitable for others, especially if they could manage to keep God in the center of their lives, but Sanatan was to play a direct, leading role in Shri Chaitanya's mission. Consequently, he denied this last chance for an easy lifestyle. He was now penniless and bereft of his servant—but he felt truly free for the first time in many years. He left Shrikanta's house with nothing more than a fine wollen blanket, which his brother-in-law had given him as a gift.

After a few days, Sanatan arrived in Benares. Although he was sorry to hear that Shri Chaitanya had already finished His tour of Vrindavan, he was pleased that the Master was now in Benares and accepting guests there. Sanatan immediately went to the house of Chandrashekhar, for he knew that this is where Shri Chaitanya would be staying.

As Sanatan approached, Shri Chaitanya said to Chandrashekhar: "There is a great devotee coming to your door. Go and let him in." Once outside, Chandrashekhar looked in both directions, but he could not see a great devotee or anyone even re-

motely fitting that description. When he came back inside and told Shri Chaitanya, the Master said, "Is there anyone at the door at all?"⁹

Since Sanatan had gone through great austerities in the jungle to get to Benares, he was totally unkempt and certainly unrecognizable as a Vaishnava. Consequently, Chandrashekhar replied: "Well I did see one disheveled individual. He looked like a Muslim mendicant, perhaps a dervish of the Sufi order..."¹⁰

"Bring him in here immediately," said Shri Chaitanya, "he is no ordinary dervish." Chandrashekhar then went out to get Sanatan, who was sitting by the door. When he heard that Shri Chaitanya wanted to see him, Sanatan happily followed Chandrashekhar into the main courtyard. Upon entering, Shri Chaitanya lovingly embraced him, and they both swooned with ecstatic love for Krishna.

After telling Sri Chaitanya the whole story of his stay in prison and the events that followed, Sanatan was put in the care of Chandrashekhar and Tapan Mishra. Sanatan first shaved his long hair and beard, at Shri Chaitanya's request. Then, Chandrashekhar took him to the Ganges so he could properly bathe and then he gave him a new set of clothes. However, Sanatan would not accept the clothes, thinking that they were too opulent. This made Shri Chaitanya very happy, for in this simple rejection of clothing Sanatan had shown a serious spirit of renunciation.

Later that same day, Shri Chaitanya and Sanatan went to Tapan Mishra's house for lunch. Although extremely pleased with Sanatan, Shri Chaitanya kept glancing at his luxuriant woolen blanket,

the one that Shrikanta had given to him. Noticing this, Sanatan could understand that Shri Chaitanya did not approve. The valuable blanket was inappropriate paraphernalia for a person in the renounced order, and so Sanatan considered discarding it.

The next day, while bathing in the Ganges, he noticed a Bengali mendicant washing a simple, torn quilt and then spreading it out to dry. Sanatan immediately approached the simple man and humbly asked if he would be willing to trade his quilt for the expensive blanket. At first, the mendicant naturally thought that Sanatan was teasing him. But Sanatan assured him: "I am not joking; I am speaking the truth. I would really like to trade my valuable blanket for your torn quilt." The mendicant gratefully agreed to the exchange.

Sanatan returned to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu with the torn quilt draped over his shoulder. When the Master asked about the blanket and Sanatan related the story, they were both visibly pleased. Shri Chaitanya then said: "I have considered this matter in some depth. Since Shri Krishna is very merciful, He has nullified your attachment for material things. Why should Krishna allow you to maintain a last bit of material attachment? After vanquishing a disease, a good physician does not allow any of the disease to remain."¹¹

The Goswami agreed: "Shri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, has saved me from the sinful life of material existence. By His desire, my last piece of material attraction is now gone." In addition to this appreciation of the Lord's mercy, Sanatan recognized his good fortune in associating with Shri Chaitanya, the Lord's most esoteric de-

scent. "Out of *Your* causeless mercy," he told Shri Chaitanya, "You have delivered me from the materialistic path. Now, by that same causeless mercy, please tell me what my duty is."

Enjoying this exchange with Shri Chaitanya, Sanatan began to inquire about the Absolute Truth. "Who am I?," Sanatan asked, "Why do the miseries of material existence permeate my life? And what is the ultimate goal?" In this way, Sanatan humbly asked generic questions that could easily have been asked by anyone, for he wanted clear, authoritative answers from Shri Chaitanya, who then soberly explained to him all the secrets of Vedic wisdom.

First, the Master explained the ontological position of the ordinary, minute spirit-soul. All souls are constitutionally servants of Krishna, Shri Chaitanya said, and they are His parts and parcels. The soul is related to God in the same way that the sun rays are related to the sun. The soul is the energy and God is the energetic source. The sun and the sunshine are, in a sense, one. As soon as there is sun, there is sunshine. And vice versa. But the sun and sunshine are different as well. If the sunshine is in one's room, it can create a pleasing sensation. But if the sun itself were in one's room, one would not survive the experience. Thus, the sun and sunshine are *qualitatively* similar—they are both fiery—but they are *quantitatively* different. So, too, is this the case with God and the living entities.

This philosophy of "simultaneous oneness with and difference from God," known as *achintya-bhedabheda-tattva* in Shri Chaitanya's language, is central to His doctrine. David Haberman elaborates:

In the system of the Goswamins, which maintains a position of differentiation within non-differentiation (*achintya-bhedabheda*), the individual is real and separate from, while yet maintaining a sameness with, the Absolute. Here, moreover, personal experience is greatly valued. Rupa frequently devaluates the Vedanta goal of union or *moksha* (see *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu*, 1.1.4, 14, 17, 32, 34), for how could one have a relationship with Krishna if individuality were given up? (The Vaishnava speaks of tasting sugar, not becoming sugar.) The goal is not to lose individual being, but rather to overcome the ignorance that keeps us from realizing who we truly are. The aim of *bhakti* is the transformation of identity, not the Vedantin identification with the non-differentiated One. This is one of the major differences between *bhakti* and Vedantic Hinduism. Rupa claims that one is ultimately a character in *Vraja-lila*—a servant, a friend, an elder, or, more important, a lover of Krishna's—but never Krishna Himself. The experience of love requires an object and a subject. Thus absorption into the Absolute is eschewed and an eternal emotional relationship with Krishna is pursued.¹²

In this way, Shri Chaitanya described the living entities as being simultaneously one with and different from God. But the living entities constitute only one of God's multifarious energies, and Shri Chaitanya wanted to give Sanatan a more thorough un-

derstanding, describing other, more confidential categories of this energy.

Krishna's "direct" energies, for example, extend from Shrimati Radharani, the greatest manifestation of these energies, to the aforementioned ordinary living beings. Subtle matter, however, such as mind, intelligence, and illusory (or false) ego, are also counted among Krishna's energies. But these are called "indirect," for they are qualitatively removed from the spiritual principle. This energy extends to the level of gross matter, or inert material elements. Nonetheless, all are energies of God and were explained in detail to Sanatan Goswami.

After this, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu briefly analyzed the three primary conceptions of the Absolute Truth, or the Brahman, Paramatma, and Bhagavan manifestations of the Supreme. With reference to ancient Vedic scriptures and logic, Shri Chaitanya showed Sanatan that the Brahman conception was rudimentary. It is the impersonal idea of divinity, stating that God is an abstract force, indescribable in concrete terms. One may arrive at this level of understanding by disciplined mental gymnastics (*gyan-yoga*).

Superior to this, however, is the Paramatma conception, wherein one realizes that the amorphous Absolute also has a more localized feature and that He actually permeates every atom in this personal form. Meditating *yogis*, after a life of grueling sensual control and developed concentration, may attain this level of spiritual realization (but it is not likely that modern-day *yogis* will make much progress on this path, for, according to the scriptures

that originally outlined the *yoga* system, this process takes hundreds if not thousands of years to perfect).

The Bhagavan feature is the highest, and this culminates in full realization of the Supreme Person, Krishna, and the heartfelt enthusiasm to worship Him with song and dance. This is the process recommended for the present age and Shri Chaitanya naturally advised Sanatan Goswami to pursue this path in earnest. One who achieves perfection in this discipline is called a Shuddha bhakta, or a pure devotee of the Lord. There is no higher attainment.

Next, Shri Chaitanya elaborately described the methodology of Krishna's descent (*avatar*). First, He told Sanatan, Krishna exists in His original self-existent form (*svayam rupa*), playing on His flute in His three-fold bending pose. This form then expands into His various hypostatic manifestations (*tad-ekatma-rupa*), which may differ in appearance and, sometimes, in potency. But these forms are still manifestations of Krishna or a direct plenary expansion. There are also indirect plenary expansions, and these were enumerated by Shri Chaitanya. Another type of expansion includes Krishna's empowered representative (*avesha-avatar*).

In addition, Shri Chaitanya explained how Krishna expands into Radharani by the three primary aspects of his potency: Sandhini, Sangvit, and Hladini. These gradually expand into His *yogamaya* energy, which is essentially spiritual in nature, and His *maha-maya* potency, which is a further expansion for manifesting the material world. Fully developing these ideas, Shri Chaitanya gave Sanatan detailed information about the nature of God.

Essentially, Shri Chaitanya described the complete Vedic revelation in regard to man's relationship with the Supreme (*sambandha-gyan*); He elaborated upon the process for developing that relationship (*abhideya-gyan*); and He gave details about the ultimate goal of that relationship (*prayojana-gyan*), realized in tangible and direct service to God through love and devotion.

After instructing Sanatan Goswami in this way for two months, Shri Chaitanya gathered His many followers and engaged in a massive *nagara-sankirtan* festival, chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare with all of the inhabitants of Benares. According to *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, all of these residents of Benares became devotees of Krishna due to Shri Chaitanya's association.¹³

Soon, the Master wanted to go to Puri, and Sanatan Goswami wanted to accompany Him. Shri Chaitanya, however, instructed Sanatan to go to Vrindavan, as He had instructed Rupa and Anupama before him. Sanatan immediately took Shri Chaitanya's words to heart and traveled to this holiest of cities. Once there, he met Subuddhi Roy, one of Shri Chaitanya's followers, who told him about Rupa and Anupama's short stay and how they had quickly left for Puri to meet the Master. Sanatan decided to do the same and, after visiting the twelve forests of Vrindavan, proceeded on the path to Puri.

Sanatan traveled in the most austere way, taking little food and water, and sleeping under a different tree every night. To remember the activities of his Master, he traveled through the Jharikhanda

forest, retracing the path followed by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Unfortunately, Sanatan developed a severe case of eczema from bathing in and drinking the stagnant water of the various ponds of this forest. Insult was added to injury when he finally arrived in Puri, where he discovered that Anupama had passed away and that Rupa had left for Vrindavan just prior to his arrival.

While in Puri, Sanatan's troubles were alleviated by his association with Haridas Thakur, the "master of the holy name," a title given by Shri Chaitanya Himself in honor of Haridas Thakur's daily chanting 300,000 names of Krishna. Every day, after going to the temple to see Lord Jagannath, Shri Chaitanya used to visit Haridas Thakur and at that time He would see Sanatan Goswami as well. Upon entering Haridas' room (Siddha bakula), He embraced Sanatan in great affection. This disturbed the Goswami. He felt unqualified to be embraced by someone as pure as Shri Chaitanya. In addition, his eczema had become severe and the sores on his body sometimes excreted blood and puss, often oozing onto the Master's soft skin. This was intolerable for Sanatan, who said that he would rather give up his own life than defile the body of Shri Chaitanya in this way.

Just as Sanatan was making plans to throw himself beneath the massive wheels of the Rathayatra cart during the annual Ratha-yatra parade, Shri Chaitanya said: "Is it not a fact that you have surrendered body and soul to Krishna? If your life is Krishna's, then you have no right to end it. The time of your demise is up to him! You cannot misuse another's property."¹⁴ In this way, Sanatan under-

stood that suicide is sinful, and no matter how much he felt like an offender, it was his duty to live and serve Krishna to the best of his ability. In fact, Shri Chaitanya also told him that He had much work to do through Sanatan's body and mind. Shri Sanatan Goswami was Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's valuable instrument.

Months passed, and Shri Chaitanya finally told Sanatan to go to Vrindavan to work with Rupa. He particularly wanted Sanatan to write a Vaishnava *smriti*, a book focusing on rules and regulations, and He gave him a basic outline for completing this work. Sanatan eventually published this as the *Hari-bhakti-vilas* under Gopal Bhatta Goswami's name, for Gopal had developed the work and had supplied additional information. Shri Chaitanya also asked Sanatan to assist Rupa in uncovering the lost Vaishnava holy places and in establishing beautifully opulent temples as well.

Traveling once again through the dense Jharikhanda forest (this time with the notes kept by Balabhadra Bhattacharya, who documented the exact path taken by Shri Chaitanya), and then through Benares and Prayag, Sanatan came to Vrindavan. When he arrived, there were still no temples. What was once the city of Krishna's youth was then lying vacant like an open field. The very first temple in Vrindavan—Madan-Mohan temple—would be established by Sanatan Goswami. His efforts set a precedent and other temples were gradually constructed. Today, Vrindavan boasts some 5,000 temples.

Like the Govinda Deity later established by Rupa Goswami, the Madan-Mohan Deity is said to have originated with Vajra, Krishna's great grandson.

To protect these Deities during the violent Muslim invasions, they were buried and, by the time of the Goswamis, were lost or forgotten. The reclamation of these Deities was part of the mandate given to the Goswamis by Shri Chaitanya.

The story behind the discovery of Madan-Mohan is particularly fascinating. It seems that Sanatan had a dream in which a beautiful Deity of Krishna was being worshiped by a humble priest from the city of Mathura. Sanatan thought that if he could worship that particular Deity in a grand way, it would attract many people to Krishna consciousness. But in the dream, at least, the Deity belonged to this humble *brahmana*, and Sanatan could not convince him to give up his Deity of Krishna. Without resolving this dilemma, the dream ended.

The next day, however, Sanatan went out to beg alms, as was his custom, and he came to the home of a poor *brahmana* named Purushottam Chaube.¹⁵ Upon entering his home, Sanatan saw that the events of his previous night's dream were in fact a reality. Sanatan gazed upon the beautiful form of Madan-Mohan, the same Deity who appeared in his dream. He knew that this Deity was meant to be worshiped in a grand way, for everyone to see.

Nonetheless, just as in Sanatan's dream, the priest at first refused to relinquish his Deity. But later that night, Madan-Mohan Himself came to the priest in a dream and insisted that he reconsider. Complying with the wishes of Madan-Mohan, the priest entrusted his Deity to Sanatan Goswami. The next day, Sanatan carried the Deity to the opposite side of Vrindavan and established the worship of Madan-Mohan in a little hut. The magnificent tem-

ple that was soon to be constructed for the Deity was erected where that little hut once stood.

The construction of the temple can be traced to a wealthy salt merchant named Krishnadas Kapoor, ¹⁶ who was one day delivering his goods by boat to a market in Agra. When the boat became grounded on a sandbar just opposite Sanatan's hut, Kapoor began to pray for the help of God. Seeing Kapoor's despair, Sanatan invited him to worship Madan-Mohan, and while he was praying before the Deity, the boat floated clear. Kapoor was then able to complete his business and, profiting large sums of money as a result, the wealthy merchant felt indebted to Madan-Mohan. Thus he agreed to finance the building of Madan-Mohan's temple. The imposing edifice that exists today was completed sometime in the 1580s.

After the worship of Madan-Mohan was firmly established, various Deities and their worship were introduced all over the holy land. Govindadev, Radha-Raman, Gopinath, Jugal-Kishor, Banke-Bihari, Radha-Ballabha, Radha-Shyamasundar, Radha-Gokulananda, Radha-Damodar, and the Krishna-Balaram Deities (established in the 1970s by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, or ISKCON) are the prominent Deities of Vrindavan. But Sanatan Goswami's Madan-Mohan is, in many ways, the most important.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada confirms the importance of Madan-Mohan:

Shрила Sanatan Goswami is the ideal spiritual master, for he delivers one the shelter of the

lotus feet of Madan-Mohan. Even though one may be unable to travel on the field of Vrindavan due to forgetfulness of his relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he can get adequate opportunity to stay in Vrindavan and derive all spiritual benefits by the mercy of Sanatan Goswami. This is also the special mercy of Madan-Mohan....In *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, Krishnadas first offers his obeisances to Madan-Mohan *vigraha* [Sanatan Goswami's Deity], the Deity who can help us progress in Krishna consciousness.¹⁷

Along with Madan-Mohan, Rupa Goswami's Govindadev Deity and Madhu Pandit's Gopinath Deity are the life and soul of Chaitanyite Vaishnavas. Madan-Mohan represents *sambandha-tattva*; Govindadev represents *abhideya-tattva*; and Gopinath represents *prayojana-tattva*. As Shрила Prabhupada says:

These three Deities have very specific qualities. Worship of Madan-Mohan is on the platform of reestablishing our forgotten relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In the beginning of our spiritual life we must worship Madan-Mohan so that He may attract us and nullify our attachment for material sense gratification. This relationship with Madan-Mohan is necessary for neophyte devotees. Then, when one wishes to render service to the Lord with strong attachment, one worships Govinda

on the platform of transcendental service....When by the grace of Krishna and the other devotees one reaches perfection in devotional service, he can appreciate Krishna as Gopijanaballabha [Gopinath], the pleasure Deity of the damsels of Vraja.¹⁸

Chanted three times a day by *brahmanas*, the famed Gayatri *mantra* is also said to honor this progression of Deities—Madan-Mohan, Govinda, and Gopinath—by specifically mentioning their names. One line of the *mantra* begins as follows: “*Klim Krishnaya Govindaya Gopijanaballabhaya...*” Traditionally, “*Krishnaya*” refers to Madan-Mohan; “*Govindaya*” refers to Govindadev; and “*Gopijanaballabhaya*” refers to Gopinath.¹⁹

These three Deities are again alluded to in the last line of the Gayatri *mantra*, known as the *kama-gayatri*: “*Klim Kamadevaya vidmahe pushpa-banaya dhimahi tan no 'nangah prachodayat.*” The inner meaning of this verse is very confidential, but Shrila Prabhupada explains it in relation to these three Deities:

Krishna is called Kamadeva or Madan-Mohan, the Deity who establishes our relationship with Krishna. Govinda, or Pushpa-bana, who carries an arrow made of flowers, is the Personality of Godhead who accepts our devotional service. Ananga, or Gopijanaballabha, satisfies all the *gopis* and is the ultimate goal of life.²⁰

As the person who established the worship of Madan-Mohan, Sanatan Goswami occupies a special position in the Chaitanyite disciplic succession. He is the representative teacher of *sambandha-gyan*, or knowledge of our proper devotional relationship with Krishna. Rupa Goswami, whose name is inseparably connected with that of Govindadev, is the representative teacher of *abhideya-gyan*, or knowledge of how to *develop* that relationship with Krishna. It is interesting, however, that Raghunath Das Goswami, not Madhu Pandit (a contemporary of the Goswamis who is usually aligned with the Gopinath Deity), is considered the representative teacher of *prayojana-gyan*, the perfection of love of God.

Nonetheless, it is said that Raghunath Das Goswami accepts the lotus feet of Shri Rupa as his highest aspiration and that Rupa, in turn, accepts Sanatan Goswami as his spiritual master and the lord of his life. In this sense, spiritual life is cyclical, for there is no higher or lower in a realm where everyone competes to be the highest by serving the lowest. It can thus be said that one devotee chases after the other, and all chase after Krishna.

The material world has a sort of "chasing" system of its own, and when one is not chasing after gross or subtle sense gratification he finds that he, too, is chasing God, albeit for materialistic reasons: Either to become His equal or to surpass Him. Such chasing is often unconscious. Nonetheless, it has its effect, and a good example of this took place in the year 1670, when the fanatic Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb ordered the destruction of all sacred images and temples. He alone was the monarch, and he

would not share his post with a mere cowherd boy named Krishna.

At that time, to protect the Lord of their lives, a band of simple villagers moved the Deity of Madan-Mohan from Vrindavan to Jaipur. Soon after the Moghul emperor's reign, however, when the Deity was again safe, He was moved to Karoli, this time at the request of the Princess of Jaipur. She and her husband, the King of Karoli, constructed an opulent temple for Madan-Mohan, who has remained there ever since.²¹

Having firmly established the worship of Madan-Mohan, Sanatan Goswami was free to write transcendental literature. Some of the books compiled by Sanatan are the *Hari-bhakti-vilas* [edited by Gopal Bhatta], *Brihat-Bhagavatamrita*, *Dashama-tipani*, and *Dashama-charita*. Since *Hari-bhakti-vilas* was discussed in the chapter on Gopal Bhatta Goswami, we need not discuss it here.

Regarding *Brihat-Bhagavatamrita*, it is divided into two parts, each dealing with the discharge of pure devotional service. The first part is an analytical study of the secrets of Vedic wisdom, including a detailed description of other planets—from the material universes to the kingdom of God.

There are also descriptions of devotees, tracing them from the most fundamental levels to the most exalted. Brahma, for instance, is described as a devotee who is representative of *karma-mishra-bhakti*, or the level of devotional service that is still mixed with fruitive desires. Lord Shiva, on the other hand, is paradigmatic of a devotee who is tinged with the desire for knowledge (*gyana-mishra-bhakti*). This is not to say that Brahma or Shiva themselves are

necessarily on this level, but that those who are on this level will be attracted to these particular modes of service. Karma-kandis, or fruitive workers, are generally attracted to Lord Brahma, while the *yogis* and *gyanis* are inclined to Lord Shiva.

Entering the realm of Shuddha-bhakti, or pure devotional service, *rasa* begins to manifest, and *Brihat-Bhagavatamrita* carefully delineates the archetypal devotees of each level. Prahlad, for example, represents *shanta-rasa*, or neutral love, for his relationship with God consists mainly of offering prayers as opposed to active service. Higher still is Hanuman, for he is an ideal servant (*dasya-rasa*). Beyond this stage we find the Pandavas, who represent the friendly relationship (*sakhya-rasa*). But the Pandavas' love pales next to that of the Yadavas, Krishna's intimate Dwaraka associates, who are headed by Uddhava. His love almost equals that of Mother Yashoda and Nanda Maharaj, Krishna's foster parents (*vatsalya-rasa*). The hierarchy, of course, culminates in the love of the *gopis*, headed by Shrimati Radharani. This is the most coveted *madhurya-rasa*, the highest level: the platform of conjugal love.

After explaining this in some detail, Sanatan Goswami begins the second part of his *Brihat-Bhagavatamrita*. There we read about the glories of the spiritual world, known as *Goloka-mahatmya-nirupana*, as well as the process for renouncing the material world. In a scientific, analytical way, Sanatan takes his readers through every aspect of spiritual life. In this way, there are fourteen chapters to *Brihat-Bhagavatamrita*, seven chapters in each part.

Dashama-tipani is Shri Sanatan's commentary on the tenth canto of *Shrimad Bhagavatam*. An-

other name for this commentary is *Brihad-Vaishnava-toshani-tika*. This work clearly explains the Chaitanyite perspective on all of Krishna's activities and thus constitutes the bona-fide inner interpretation of the scriptures. *Dashama-tipani* was eventually given to Jiva Goswami to edit, and that version was published separately under the title *Laghu-toshani*. These two commentaries on the tenth canto are both invaluable contributions to the storehouse of Chaitanyite Vaishnava literature. Although Sanatan wrote other important books, such as *Dashama-charita*, his *Hari-bhakti-vilas*, *Brihat-Bhagavatamrita*, and *Dashama-tipani* remain his most important.

In fact, the significance of Sanatan Goswami's literary accomplishments cannot be stressed enough. Extolling the virtues of this literature, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada has written:

Shri Sanatan Goswami Prabhu, the teacher of the science of devotional service, wrote several books, of which the *Brihat-Bhagavatamrita* is very famous; anyone who wants to know about the subject matter of devotees, devotional service, and Krishna must read this book. Sanatan Goswami also wrote a special commentary on the Tenth Canto of *Shrimad Bhagavatam* known as *Dashama-tippini*, which is so excellent that by reading it one can understand very deeply the pastimes of Krishna in His exchanges of loving activities.²²

Ontologically, Sanatan Goswami is the closest friend of Shri Rupa. This may in part explain his proclivity toward transcendental literature and his insights into spiritual life. As Kavi Karnapur has revealed in his *Shri Gaura-ganoddesha-dipika*:

Rupa Manjari's closest friend, who was known by the names Rati Manjari and Labanga Manjari, descended as Shрила Sanatan Goswami. He was honored by everyone and was considered to be like an extension of the transcendental body of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Sanatan Kumar, the jewel among the sages, entered the body of Sanatan Goswami, who is therefore also considered to be an incarnation of Sanatan Kumar.²³

Notes

1. Shri B.V. Puri Swami, *Six Goswamins* (Rajahmundry, India, Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mission, 1984), p. 2.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
5. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 7, ch. 19, text 15, p. 252.
6. *Ibid.*, *Madhya-lila* 8, ch. 20, text 3, p. 3.

7. Ibid., texts 5-13, pp. 4-8.
8. Ibid., text 16, p. 10.
9. Ibid., text 48, p. 23.
10. Ibid., text 49, p. 24.
11. Ibid., texts 90-1, p. 45.
12. David L. Haberman, op. cit., p. 38. To date, the most relevant and coherent analysis of the "simultaneous difference and nondifference" doctrine, at least for a contemporary Western audience, was presented by Graham Schweig, "Synthesis and Divinity: Shri Chaitanya's Philosophy of *Achintya-bhed-abheda-Tattva*," in T.D. Singh, ed., *Synthesis of Science and Religion: Critical Essays and Dialogues* (San Francisco, Bhaktivedanta Institute, 1987), pp. 420-9.
13. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 9, chapter 25.
14. see *Letters from Srila Prabhupada*, Vol. II (Culver City, CA., The Vaishnava Institute, 1987), p. 731.
15. Dhruva Maharaj Das, op. cit., p. 46.
16. Ibid.
17. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Adi-lila* 1, ch. 1, text 19, pp. 29-30.

18. Ibid.

19. From an unpublished manuscript by Bhakti Vidhan Mahayogi Swami, *Lives of the Vaishnava Saints* (1987), p. 179.

20. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 3, ch. 8, text 138, p. 171, purport.

21. Dhruva Maharaj Das, op. cit., p. 47.

22. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Adi-lila* 1, ch. 5, text 203, p. 498, purport.

23. *Shri Gaura-ganoddesha-dipika*, op. cit., texts 181-2, p. 111.

5/ Jiva Goswami

Jiva Goswami (1513-1598) delineates his genealogy in *Laghu-toshani*, which is his commentary on Sanatan Goswami's larger work, *Vaishnavatoshani*.¹ The genealogy is important because it embodies the little information that exists about Rupa, Sanatan, and Jiva's familial background. Jiva Goswami's life and work are emblematic of the Vaishnava way of devotion. He dedicated every moment to his mission of codifying Shri Chaitanya's philosophy for the benefit of mankind. To this end, he organized the movement begun by the five senior Goswamis.

Consequently, Jiva Goswami is known as the most systematic preacher among the Six Goswa-

mis and has at times been called the greatest philosopher in all of Indian history. In fact, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada has commented that "the Vaishnavas are by far the greatest philosophers in the world, and the greatest among them was Shрила Jiva Goswami Prabhu..."²

Jiva was the youngest and most prolific writer among the Six Goswamis. In addition, he was the last among them to reach Vrindavan, and consequently he is not mentioned in any of the early biographies of Shri Chaitanya. Jiva is, however, glorified in several verses from *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, but even there it is usually in connection with the other five Goswamis. The little that is known about Shri Jiva comes primarily from *Bhakti-ratnakara*, which has been quoted throughout this work, and another, earlier book (although also from the seventeenth century), called *Prema-vilas*. This latter work was written by Nityananda Das, a student of Nityananda Prabhu's wife, Jahnava-devi, and it is therefore accepted by many Chaitanyite Vaishnavas as an authoritative source.

Since biographical information concerning Jiva Goswami is scanty, much debate has arisen regarding details. For example, some scholars deny that 1513 was the year in which Shri Jiva was born, for Shri Chaitanya met Rupa, Sanatan, and Anupama (Jiva's father and the younger brother of Rupa and Sanatan) later that same year in Ramakeli. This presents a problem because, according to *Bhakti-ratnakara*, Jiva, too, was in Ramakeli at this time. And although he was only a child, he was old enough to get there by himself and witness the loving interaction between his uncles, his father, and Shri

Chaitanya.³ How, then, could Jiva have been born that same year? The only possible conclusion is that either the date of Jiva's birth is merely an approximation, which has already been admitted by Bhaktivinode Thakur,⁴ or that Jiva was an infant of miraculous capabilities. (As with the other Goswamis, Jiva's ontological position is special: He was considered an incarnation of the *gopi* known as Vilas-manjari.⁵ So supernatural occurrences are not beyond the realm of possibility.)

Whatever the answer, as Jiva Goswami grew in years, he gradually developed all of the bodily symptoms of a Maha-purush, or an empowered divinity. Scriptural descriptions of such souls include elongated lotus-like eyes, high nose and forehead, large shoulders and chest, hands reaching to his knees, an effulgence that appears like molten gold, and other specific features. *Bhakti-ratnakara* says that Jiva Goswami was not devoid of any of these bodily symptoms.⁶ In addition, he was a prodigy, mastering at a young age such subjects as grammar, poetry, logic, and scriptural hermeneutics.

As described in Chapter Three, Shri Chaitanya had first met Rupa and Anupama in Ramakeli and had had a second encounter that took place soon thereafter in Allahabad. This was to be the last time that Anupama would see the Master in this incarnation, for the very next year, in 1514, while traveling through Bengal on the way to Puri, Anupama passed away on the banks of the Ganges. This devastating event had a tremendous effect on Jiva Goswami who, although only a child at the time, resolved to renounce the world and its cruelties. Thus, with a burning passion for spiritual enlightenment,

Shri Jiva studied the scriptures as he grew into his teens. At this time he began the worship of Krishna-Balaram, the Deity forms of Krishna and His elder brother.⁷ Shri Jiva saw Krishna and Balaram as non-different from Shri Chaitanya and Nityananda Prabhu.⁸

This period in Jiva's life and the scenario that followed are summarized by author and Sanskrit scholar Stuart Elkman:

With his father dead and his two uncles now settled in Vrindavan, Jiva reportedly lost all interest in worldly pursuits, hoping only to join his two uncles in Vrindavan one day. By the time he had reached the age of twenty, his mother was also dead, and he resolved to lead the life of a Vaishnava recluse in the company of Rupa and Sanatan....Before heading for Vrindavan, Jiva first visited the town of Navadvip [Shri Chaitanya's birthplace], where he was met by Nityananda and taken to all of the places associated with Chaitanya's youth. At the bidding of Nityananda, Jiva proceeded to Benares to complete his studies in Sanskrit learning.⁹

Interesting details of Jiva Goswami's trip to Navadvip are found in Bhaktivinode Thakur's *Navadvip Dham Mahatmya*. From the earliest age, Jiva desired to visit Shri Chaitanya's birthplace. Jiva's mother did not want her only son to travel and lead the austere life of a renunciant. Nonetheless, Jiva conceived of a ruse by which he proposed that he would go on a short trip to his ancestral home of

Fatehabad. His mother agreed and Jiva arranged for the boatman, who was supposed to take him to Fatehabad, to take him instead to Navadvip.¹⁰

Once in Navadvip, Shri Jiva met Nityananda Prabhu, as noted by Stuart Elkman. Jiva immediately recognized Nityananda as nondifferent from his Balaram Deity. "You are the form of the universe," Jiva told Nityananda, "You are Balaram. In fact, You are so infinite that I cannot properly describe Your qualities. One thing I know for certain is that You are my eternal master and I am Your servant. My only aspiration is the shade of Your lotus feet. That person to whom You give mercy easily gets the lotus feet of Shri Chaitanya and drowns in the water of love of God. Without Your mercy, no one can get Shri Chaitanya, even if he worships Him for one hundred lifetimes. I therefore pray for Your merciful glance."¹¹

After glorifying Nityananda Prabhu in this way, Shri Jiva was taken by Nityananda Himself on a complete tour of Navadvip. First, they went to Shri Chaitanya's birthplace; then they visited the famous house of Shrivasa Thakur, where blissful nocturnal *kirtans* were once held; there, they actually met Shrivasa, who took them to Sachi's house; Sachidevi and Vishnupriya, Shri Chaitanya's widow, then cooked *prashadam* (sacred vegetarian food) for them; next, Vamsivadana, Sachi's servant,¹² accompanied them to the temple of Jagannath Mishra, where Shri Chaitanya's father had worshiped the family Deity of Lakshmi-Narayana. In this way, Jiva Goswami saw all nine islands of Navadvip.

After their tour of the holy *dham*, Nityananda Prabhu told Shri Jiva to go to Vrindavan by way of

Benares. The reason for passing through Benares was to locate Madhusudana Vachaspati, an important disciple of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, and to take lessons from him. Vachaspati was to become Jiva Goswami's mentor.¹³

Arriving in Benares, Jiva Goswami quickly found Madhusudana Vachaspati and accepted his tutelage. In a relatively short time, Shri Jiva became particularly well-versed in all aspects of Vedanta philosophy and he developed a reputation as an eminent scholar. Having written *Sarvasangvadini*, wherein he refers to such divergent *Vedanta Sutra* commentators as Madhva, Ramanuja, Shankara, and Vachaspati, he became known as a thorough and well-rounded authority on all branches of learning.¹⁴ To this day, Benares Hindi University honors Jiva by dedicating an entire department to the study of his works.

Once Shri Jiva had established himself in Benares, he recalled the instructions of Nityananda Prabhu. While in Navadvip, Nityananda Prabhu had told him: "Go soon to Vrindavan. That place has been awarded to your family, to your father and uncles, by Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and therefore you must go there immediately."¹⁵ This recollection, coupled with a burning desire to assist Rupa and Sanatan, influenced him to leave Benares and start for Vrindavan. Krishnadas Kaviraj, author of *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, confirms that by the time Jiva Goswami was twenty years old, he had gone to Vrindavan and fulfilled the mandate given to him by Nityananda Prabhu.¹⁶

Other than Jiva Goswami's massive literary contribution (It is said that he compiled not less

than 400,000 Sanskrit verses!),¹⁷ not much is really known about his stay in Vrindavan. According to *Bhakti-ratnakara*, the following devotees (among others) were there when Jiva first arrived and they greeted him with love and friendship: The other five Goswamis, Prabodhananda Saraswati, Kashishvar Pandit, and Krishnadas Kaviraj.¹⁸ Rupa and Sanatan were overjoyed to see their illustrious nephew associating with the Vrindavan devotees.

Soon after arriving in Krishna's holy land, Shri Jiva approached Sanatan, his eldest uncle, for initiation into the Chaitanyite Vaishnava line. But out of humility Sanatan deferred the responsibility of initiating Jiva to Rupa Goswami. Before Rupa initiated Shri Jiva, however, he decided to test his mettle. To this end, Rupa gave Jiva menial service to perform. He had Jiva prepare articles for Deity worship; beg alms; prepare food; research texts; massage his feet; and prepare palm leaves for his writing.¹⁹ Highly pleased with Jiva Goswami's sense of selfless service, Shri Rupa formally initiated him into Chaitanyite Vaishnavism.

Some months had passed since Jiva's initiation, and a traveling scholar named Rupanarayana Saraswati came to Vrindavan. He was well-known as one of the most learned men in the country and it was said that he could not be defeated in philosophical debate. In fact, he was called a *Digvijayi*, which meant that he was "a person who had conquered everyone in all directions." His pride, however, was as vast as his learning. And as he went from village to village in order to wrangle with local scholars, he demanded a *jayapatra*, or a "certificate of victory," from his opponents.

By this time, Rupa and Sanatan were known all over northern India as the greatest of all scholars. In Rupanarayana's usual arrogance, he rudely challenged the two famous brothers to a debate. When Rupa and Sanatan declined, the proud Rupanarayana said, "You are obviously frauds! If you were as learned as people say you are, you would both accept my challenge."

With great humility, Rupa and Sanatan said that their reputation was exaggerated by well-wishers and that they were in fact not fit to debate such a learned and undefeatable individual. Rupanarayana was greatly pleased to hear this. Immediately thinking of his reputation, he asked for his usual *jayapatra* so he could show others that he had defeated Rupa and Sanatan. Without any hesitation, the two humble brothers signed his certificate and sent him on his way.

Blinded by vanity, Rupanarayana felt that he was now the greatest scholar of all time. He completely neglected the fact that he had defeated Rupa and Sanatan only by default and that it was their sheer humility that allowed him easy victory. Moreover, Rupanarayana soon heard that Rupa and Sanatan had a young nephew who was quickly developing a reputation that was equal to theirs. Rupanarayana knew that if he really wanted to establish himself as the greatest of all scholars, then he would have to defeat young Jiva as well. Approaching Jiva Goswami, Rupanarayana presented his letter stating that he had defeated Rupa and Sanatan. Jiva was incensed. How could his teachers, Rupa and Sanatan, who were intimate associates of the Lord, be de-

feated by an ordinary scholar—or even by the greatest of scholars?

Rupanarayana demanded that Jiva enter debate with him, for once he defeated Jiva, he said, his reputation would be unequalled. As Jiva listened to the distasteful boasting of Rupanarayana, he felt an intense urge to silence him once and for all. Jiva's youth got the better of him. Although his uncles avoided wasting valuable time in some mundane debate, Jiva accepted the challenge.

Young Jiva spent seven days on the banks of the Yamuna trying to vindicate the reputation of his uncles. On the final day, the contest of scholarship was complete. Jiva had won the debate. After this, Rupanarayana went away in great shame and was never seen again in Vrindavan.

Jiva, on the other hand, was anxious to share his conquest with Rupa and Sanatan. He was especially excited to tell the good news to Rupa, his *guru*. When he approached Rupa, however, he was severely chastised: "You have prematurely taken to the renounced order of life," Rupa told him, "and consequently you were not able to conquer your anger and sense of pride. No one who rejoices in humiliating others, or who asserts his own worth, is fit to live in Vrindavan. You are hereby banished, and you should leave immediately."

Severely humbled, Jiva bowed to his master and quickly left Vrindavan for neighboring Mathura. He took Rupa Goswami's harsh words to heart and practiced great austerities in an attempt to atone for his misconduct. It is said that he lived in the hollow of a tree, ate simple food (and only once a day), and

took a vow of silence that was to last for one solid year.

This exile might have lasted even longer, but it was cut short by the mercy of Sanatan Goswami. When Sanatan discovered what had happened to Jiva, he immediately went to Rupa and told him that he was neglecting to follow one of Shri Chaitanya's cardinal teachings. Rupa said, "What? Which teaching am I not following? Please tell me." To this, Sanatan said, "You recite the teachings of our Master. When you get to the one in question, I will let you know."

As Rupa patiently recited all of Shri Chaitanya's precepts, he finally came to "*Jiva Doya*," which means "Kindness to all living beings." *Doya* means "kindness." And *Jiva* means "living beings." *Jiva*, however, is also the name of Jiva Goswami. Realizing the import of Sanatan's curious pun, Rupa laughed heartily and decided to be "kind to Jiva." In this way, Rupa rescinded his banishment.²⁰

Critics of Jiva Goswami foolishly point to this episode in Jiva's life in their attempts to show that he had acted improperly. Chaitanyite Vaishnavas, however, understand that Jiva was merely playing a part in order to instruct others about the pitfalls of mundane scholarship. Critics say that Jiva should have been more humble, and that if he were, he would have never been banished by Rupa Goswami. Such critics neglect the fact that if Jiva had not debated with the arrogant scholar, then Vaishnavism would have fallen into ill-repute, for the mass of people would have continued to believe that Rupa and Sanatan had been defeated by Rupanarayana.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada comments in this connection:

[Critics of Jiva Goswami] do not know...that both humility and meekness are appropriate when one's own honor is insulted. But when Lord Vishnu or the *acharyas* [empowered teachers] are blasphemed, one should not be humble and meek but must act. One should follow the example given by Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Lord Chaitanya says in His prayer: 'One can chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking himself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and should be ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.' Nevertheless, when the Lord was informed that Nityananda Prabhu was injured by Jagai and Madhai, He immediately went to the spot, angry like fire, wanting to kill them. Thus Lord Chaitanya has explained His verse by the example of His own behavior. One should tolerate insults against oneself, but when there is blasphemy committed against superiors such as other Vaishnavas, one should be neither humble nor meek; one must take proper steps to counteract such blasphemy.²¹

There are two other stories that have been fabricated to defame Jiva Goswami. The first story

asserts that Krishnadas Kaviraj, after completing his great *magnim opus* known as *Chaitanya-charitam-rita*, showed his work to Jiva, who then threw it in a well, thinking that the Kaviraj's book was too much competition for Jiva's own work. Krishnadas Kaviraj, the story goes, was so shocked by the Goswami's action that he immediately died. The problem with this story, however, is that it does not enjoy any historical or textual substantiation, either by scholars or practitioners.²²

The second story that was contrived by Shri Jiva Goswami's critics is perhaps more serious than the first. They accuse Jiva of denying the important philosophical doctrine of *parakiya-rasa*, which states that Krishna's relationship with the married *gopis* is superior to His relationship with the unmarried *gopis* (even though from the conventional point of view it is immoral to cavort with married women).

Those who cannot conceive of Krishna's transcendental position prefer to think of Radha and Krishna as married to each other (*svakiya-rasa*), and in this way they can accommodate Radharani's relationship with Him.²³ These critics can never realize that mundane ethical codes and moral principles lose all meaning when it comes to God and His eternal associates. While devotees in this world are obliged to follow the highest standards of ethics and morality, in the kingdom of God there is a completely different standard: everything is calculated by how much it brings pleasure to the Lord.

Unable to accept that Radharani is in fact married to someone else, neophytes on the spiritual path cannot understand that the relationship between Radha and Krishna becomes even more sweet

due to the thrilling risk engendered by Their extra-marital affair. It should also be remembered that in the material world such a relationship is considered base. This is all the more reason that in the spiritual world—which is the exact opposite of the material world—it would be considered the zenith of transcendental loving relationships.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada comments on Shrila Jiva Goswami's alleged rejection of *parakiya-rasa*:

Actually, when Jiva Goswami was alive, some of his followers disliked the *parakiya-rasa* of the *gopis*. Therefore, Shrila Jiva Goswami, for their spiritual benefit, supported *svakiya-rasa*, for he could understand that *sahajiyas* [“cheap imitators”] would otherwise exploit the *parakiya-rasa*, as they are actually doing at the present. Unfortunately, in Vrindavan and Navadvip it has become fashionable among *sahajiyas*, in their debauchery, to find an unmarried sexual partner to live with to execute devotional service in *parakiya-rasa*. Forseeing this, Shrila Jiva Goswami supported *svakiya-rasa*, and later all the Vaishnava *acharyas* also approved of it. Shrila Jiva Goswami was never opposed to the transcendental *parakiya-rasa*, nor has any other Vaishnava disapproved of it. Shrila Jiva Goswami strictly followed his predecessor *gurus* and Vaishnavas, Shrila Rupa and Sanatan Goswami, and Shrila Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami accepted him as one of his instructor *gurus*.²⁴

The unfounded criticisms levelled against Jiva Goswami have long been laid to rest by stalwart authorities and scholars of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, such as Bhaktivinode Thakur, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, and His Divine Grace Shрила Prabhupada. In fact, historians now consider Shri Jiva to be one of the most important teachers of Chaitanyite theology, and they attribute to him the preservation of the tradition. Through his impassioned preaching spirit, he served the dual purpose of carrying on the Goswami mission of codifying Shri Chaitanya's teachings and enlivening others to take up the banner of the *sankirtan* movement. This has been noted by Amarnath Chatterjee, professor of history at the University of Delhi:

Among the Six Goswamis, Jiva alone can be regarded as a systematic preacher. It was he who planned the work of propagation in Bengal and Orissa in the post-Chaitanya-Nityananda period (seventeenth century). Consequently, he trained Shrinivas, Narottam, and Shyamananda in the basic tenets of the Vaishnava faith, entrusted them with preaching work, and directed them finally to proceed to the eastern provinces with the Vaishnava literature.²⁵

Jiva Goswami's fame spread all over India. As a result, Emperor Akbar, most tolerant of the Moghul rulers, travelled to Vrindavan in the year 1570, just to have an exclusive audience with the Goswami. It is said that Akbar was moved beyond

words, and that he began to patronize the work of the Goswamis. While there are scholars who question the authenticity of this event, Akbar's enthusiastic patronage of the Goswamis is explained by prominent historian F. S. Growse: "Akbar the Great, as he is known, was taken blindfolded into the garden called Nidhiban. There, such a marvelous vision was revealed to him that he was fain to acknowledge the place as indeed pious ground. Hence the cordial support which he gave the attendant Rajas [Goswamis], when they expressed their wish to erect a series of buildings worthy of the local Deity."²⁶

It is therefore concluded that Akbar's visit played a central role in the development of Vrindavan in those formative years. Having had a genuine spiritual experience by the grace of Jiva Goswami, the great emperor directed his men to commence construction of the four original temples of Vrindavan: Madan-Mohan, Govindadev, Gopinath, and Jugalkishor. It is said that at this time Jiva Goswami met many other notable personalities, such as the poetess Mirabai,²⁷ but there is little reliable information concerning these meetings.

Nonetheless, much is known about Jiva Goswami's construction of the Radha Damodar Temple, one of the most important developments to occur during his stay in Vrindavan. When land was purchased by a wealthy servant of Akbar named Alisha Chaudhari (for the express purpose of assisting Shri Jiva in the spreading of Vaishnavism), the Goswami naturally took this as an opportunity to properly worship a set of Radha-Krishna Deities that were given to him by Rupa Goswami. And so Jiva

supervised the building of the Radha Damodar Mandir, one of the classic temples of Vrindavan.

In the courtyard of this temple, there are rooms that have traditionally been rented to holy-men as they come to honor Jiva Goswami's temple, a tribute to Radha Damodar. On the eastern side of the temple grounds, there is the room where His Divine Grace Shрила Prabhupada resided for six years before leaving India to sail to the United States in 1965. While in this room, Shрила Prabhupada produced the first three volumes of his translation and commentary on *Shrimad Bhagavatam*. With the inspiration of Jiva Goswami and Rupa Goswami (whose tomb is in this same courtyard), Shрила Prabhupada planned his strategy for forming his International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which he utilized to spread the teachings and practice of Chaitanyite Vaishnavism all over the world.

It is said that the Six Goswamis, too, used to meet at the Radha Damodar temple and plan the propagation of Krishna consciousness. To facilitate this planning, Jiva Goswami—with men given to him by Akbar—masterminded the construction of a *Granth-bhandara*, or a library, where he would store all handwritten copies of *granth*s (scriptures) and the books of Rupa, Sanatan, and the other Goswamis.²⁸ Jiva's eagerness to preserve these valuable books can be seen in his *Sankalpa-patra*, or his last will and testament.

Preservation of the tradition by prolific literary achievement became Jiva's most important contribution to Chaitanyite Vaishnavism. Scholars today marvel at Jiva Goswami's massive output of theological literature. Jiva's accomplishment in this

regard has been noted by author and historian Sushil Kumar De:

Jiva Goswamin was a more prolific, versatile, and voluminous writer, and it is difficult to give a complete list of his works. The enumeration of Krishnadas Kaviraj (*Madhya* 1; *Antya* 7) is very brief, but the *Bhakti-ratnakara* cites some traditional Sanskrit verses which assign more than twenty different works to Jiva. Most of his works, however, are commentaries, abstracts, or supplements, elucidating the learned treatises of his uncles, who found in him a very apt and learned interpreter.²⁹

Jiva Goswami composed and edited at least twenty-five books.³⁰ These are all considered important classics in the line of Shri Chaitanya, and they are listed as follows: (1) *Hari-namamrita-vyakarana*, (2) *Sutra-malika*, (3) *Dhatu-sangraha*, (4) *Krishnar-cha-dipika*, (5) *Gopal-virudavali*, (6) *Rasamrita-she-sha*, (7) *Shri Madhava-mahotsav*, (8) *Shri Sankalpa-kalpabriksha*, (9) *Bhavartha-suchaka-champu*, (10) *Gopal-tapani-tika*, (11) *Brahma-sanghita-tika*, also known as *Dik-darshani* [commentary on *Brahma-sanghita*], (12) *Bhakti-rasamrita-sesha* [commentary on the *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu*], (13) *Lochana-rochani* [a commentary on Shri Rupa's *Ujjvala-nilamani*], (14) *Yogasara-stava-tika* [a commentary on the *Padma Purana*], (15) *Gayatri-bhashya* [an explanation of the Gayatri *mantra* as referred to in *Agni Purana*], (16) An elaborate description of Krishna's lotus feet, particularly as they are depicted in *Padma*

Purana, (17) A description of Shrimati Radharani's lotus feet, (18) *Gopal-champu* [in two parts], and (19-25) seven *Sandarbhās*: the *Krama*, *Tattva*, *Bhagavat*, *Paramatma*, *Krishna*, *Bhakti*, and *Priti Sandarbhās*.

Although all of these works are important, some are considered particularly noteworthy. For example, Jiva Goswami's grammar, entitled *Hari-namamrita-vyakarana*, is considered to have an almost mystical effect on its readers. His Divine Grace Shрила Prabhupada has commented that if one studies this work he can learn rules of Sanskrit grammar and simultaneously he can become a great devotee of Krishna.³¹ Janardan Chakravarti has explained this grammar in some depth: "A very ingenious treatise...utilizing God's name by way of enunciating the rules of Sanskrit grammar. It is divided into eighteen *prakāṣanas*, such, for instance, as *sarveshvara-sandhi*, *Vishnu-jana-sandhi*, *Vishnusarga-sandhi*, *Vishnupad-prakaran...*"³² The precedent for explaining grammar by the utilization of Lord Krishna's many names, of course, was set by Shri Chaitanya Himself. Jiva Goswami thus sought to emulate his Master.

Even surpassing his grammar in importance, however, are Jiva's more intensely theological works. His *Radha-Krishnarchana-dipika*, for example, is a masterful composition that gives details about worshipping Radha and Krishna together. This is a significant contribution to the Chaitanyite *sampradaya*. So, too, is Jiva Goswami's *Gopal Champu*, which is divided into two parts. The first part, *purva*, consists of thirty-three chapters that elaborately describe Krishna's activities in Vrindavan. The second part,

uttara, consists of thirty-seven chapters and describes the Lord's activities in Mathura and Dvaraka. In its entirety, *Gopal Champu* is a great epic, discussing the gamut of Krishna's activities in His original manifestation. It is written in elaborate poetic style and with profound devotion.

Also significant is the famous *Krama Sandarbha*. Often described as the "seventh" of the six *sandarbhās*, it is Jiva's elaborate commentary on all twelve cantos of *Shrimad Bhagavatam*. Most important, however are the *Shat* ("six") *sandarbhās* themselves. A summary of their overwhelmingly thorough contents is given by His Divine Grace Shрила Prabhu-pada:

Bhagavat-sandarbhā is also known as *Shat-sandarbhā*. In the first part, called *Tattva-sandarbhā*, it is proved that *Shrimad Bhagavatam* is the most authoritative evidence directly pointing to the Absolute Truth. The second *sandarbhā*, called *Bhagavat-sandarbhā*, draws a distinction between impersonal Brahman and localized Paramatma and describes the spiritual world and the domination of the mode of goodness devoid of contamination by passion and ignorance, the other two material modes....There are also discussions of the eternality of Deity worship, the omnipotence of the Deity, His all-pervasiveness, His giving shelter to everyone, His subtle and gross potencies, His personal manifestations, His expressions of form, quality, and pastimes, His transcendental position and His complete form.

The third *sandarbha* is called *Paramatma-sandarbha*, and in this book there is a description of Paramatma (Supersoul) and an explanation of how the Supersoul exists in millions and millions of living entities. There are discussions of the differences between the qualitative incarnations, and discourses concerning the living entities, *maya*, the material world, and the theory of transformation....There is also a discussion of how the *lila-avatar* incarnations respond to the desires of the devotees and how the Supreme Personality of Godhead is characterized by the six opulences [strength, beauty, wealth, fame, knowledge, and renunciation].

The fourth *sandarbha* is called the *Krishna-sandarbha*, and in this book Krishna is proved to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead. There are discussions of Krishna's pastimes and qualities, His superintendence of the *purusha-avatars*, and so forth....There are also descriptions of the Goloka planet, Vrindavan (the eternal place of Krishna), the identity of Goloka and Vrindavan, the Yadavas and the cowherd boys (both eternal associates of Krishna), the adjustment and equality of the manifest and unmanifest pastimes, Shri Krishna's manifestation in Gokula, the queens of Dvaraka as expansions of the internal potency, and, superior to them, the superexcellent *gopis*. There is also a list of the *gopis'* names and a discussion of the topmost position of Shri-mati Radharani.

The fifth *sandarbha* is called *Bhakti-sandarbha*, and in this book there is a discussion of how devotional service can be directly executed....There is a discussion of how the self is manifest through *bhakti*. There is also a discussion of the self's bliss, as well as how *bhakti*, even imperfectly executed, enables one to attain the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead....There is a discussion of the differences between the *maha-bhagavat* and the ordinary devotee....There is also a discussion of *raganuga-bhakti* (spontaneous love of Godhead), of the specific purpose of becoming a devotee of Lord Krishna, and a comparative study of other perfectional stages.

The sixth *sandarbha* is called *Priti-sandarbha*, a thesis on love of Godhead. Here it is stated that through love of Godhead, one becomes perfectly liberated and attains the highest goal of life. A distinction is made between the liberated condition of a personalist and that of an impersonalist....Of all kinds of liberation, liberation in loving service to the Lord is described as the most exalted, and meeting the Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face is shown to be the highest perfection of life....Finally, there is a discussion of overlapping of different *rasas*, and there are discussions of *shanta* (neutrality), servitorship, taking shelter, parental love, conjugal love, direct transcendental enjoyment (*sambhoga*) and enjoyment in separa-

tion (*vipralambha*), previous attraction and the glories of Shrimati Radharani.³³

In these *sandarbhas*, then, Jiva Goswami succeeded in fulfilling the goals not only of his prestigious uncles and Shri Chaitanya, but of the entire world. This is so because, whether they know it or not, everyone is thirsting after spiritual knowledge, and this knowledge was delivered to its fullest degree in the *Shat-sandarbha* of Jiva Goswami. Western philosophers are now studying the *sandarbhas* and are marvelling at its wisdom and profundity.

It is sometimes said that the six *sandarbhas* represent the perfection of *sambandha-gyan*, *abhideya-gyan*, and *prayojana-gyan*. Of these six, the first four *sandarbhas* are devoted to *sambandha*; the fifth is devoted to *abhideya*; and the sixth to *prayojana*. Consequently, the glorious *Shat-sandarbha* is considered the most important philosophical treatise in the history of Chaitanyite Vaishnavism.

Notes

1. This genealogy is also found in *Bhakti-ratnakara*, op. cit., First Wave, texts 540-77, pp. 24-8.
2. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Adi-lila* 2, ch. 7, text 102, p. 83, purport.
3. *Bhakti-ratnakara*, op. cit., text 638, p. 30.

4. The birthdates used throughout are admittedly an approximation. See first footnote in the chapter on Raghunath Das Goswami.
5. *Gaura-ganoddasha-dipika*, op. cit., texts 194-207, pp. 117-122.
6. *Bhakti-ratnakara*, op. cit., texts 743-48, p. 34.
7. Ibid., text 720, p. 33.
8. Ibid., text 727-39, p. 34.
9. See Stuart Elkman, *Jiva Goswamin's Tattva-sandarbha* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), pp. 21-2.
10. See also *Bhakti-ratnakara*, op. cit., text 741, p. 34.
11. *Navadvip Dham Mahatmya*, op. cit., p. 8.
12. Vamsivadana is the personification of Krishna's flute.
13. *Navadvip Dham Mahatmya*, op. cit., p. 12.
14. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Adi-lila* 2, ch. 10, text 85, p.306, purport.
15. Ibid., *Antya-lila* 2, ch. 4, texts 232-35, pp. 112-14.
16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., text 231, p. 112.

18. See *Bhakti-ratnakara*, op. cit., First Wave.

19. Ibid.

20. The Rupanarayana story is told in Nityananda Das, *Prema-vilas*, (ed., Yashoda Lal Talukdar, Calcutta, Patrika Press, 1913), nineteenth chapter. Also see D.C. Sen, *The Vaishnava Literature of Medieval Bengal*, op. cit., pp. 44-8. The story is also recounted in *Bhakti-ratnakara*, but with certain modifications. For instance, Rupanarayana's name is changed to Ballabha Bhatta. However, some say that the Ballabha Bhatta incident is a different pastime altogether.

21. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Adi-lila* 2, ch. 10, text 85, pp. 307-8, purport.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Amarnath Chatterjee, *Sri Krishna Chaitanya: An Historical Study on Gaudiya Vaishnavism* (Delhi, Associated Publishing, 1983), p. 73.

26. F.S. Growse, op. cit., part 1, p. 123.

27. Goswami Nabhaji, *Bhaktamal* (Hindi, with notes by Priyadaji, Lucknow, fifth edition, 1961), verse

479, p. 721. *Bhaktamal* also mentions a meeting between Mirabai and Rupa Goswami.

28. *Ibid.*, verse 374, p. 612.

29. S.K. De, *Early History of the Vaishnava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, op. cit., p. 156.

30. *Bhakti-ratnakara*, op. cit., text 833, p. 40.

31. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Adi-lila* 3, ch. 13, text 29, p. 68, purport.

32. Janardan Chakravarti, op. cit., p. 65.

33. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Madhya-lila* 1, ch. 1, text 43, pp. 28-30, purport.

6/ Raghunath Bhatta Goswami

Raghunath Bhatta Goswami (1505-1579)¹ is, in many ways, the most mysterious of the Six Goswamis. Although Chaitanya Mahaprabhu considered Raghunath Bhatta's singing, cooking, and recitation of *Shrimad Bhagavatam* to be unparalleled in the history of Vaishnavism, little else is known about this particular Goswami. In fact, among the Six Goswamis, Raghunath Bhatta is the only one to have not left any literary contribution, and this, too, adds to the lack of information about him.² It is known that his ancestry hails from East Bengal, but there is no clear genealogy as there is for Jiva Goswami and his two illustrious uncles, Rupa and Sanatan.

Documentary evidence, however, suggests that in 1503 Raghunath Bhatta's father, Tapan Mishra, relocated to Benares at the request of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.³ It has also been discovered that Tapan Mishra moved there only two years before the birth of his child.⁴ Thus, the year 1505 has been widely accepted by scholars of Chaitanyite Vaishnavism as the year of Raghunath Bhatta's birth. In this way, it has also been concluded that when Shri Chaitanya was returning to Puri from Vrindavan (sometime in 1514) and finally arrived in Benares, Raghunath Bhatta was only nine years old.⁵

Shri Chaitanya had come to Benares to see the prominent devotees there, such as Chandrashekar (the physician) and Tapan Mishra. He also came to Benares in order to defeat the *mayavadi* philosophers (who proliferated in that city) and instruct Sanatan Goswami. But one of the most significant events to take place during Shri Chaitanya's short stay in Benares was the humble service rendered by a young boy, for this boy would become one of Mahaprabhu's most dedicated followers: Raghunath Bhatta Goswami.

While in Benares, the Master resided at the home of Chandrashekar and accepted His daily lunch at the house of Tapan Mishra. Whenever Chaitanya Mahaprabhu used to arrive at the Mishra house, young Raghunath Bhatta used to anxiously approach Him and ask to be engaged in some menial service. Shri Chaitanya allowed the boy to massage His legs and wash His dishes. Although Raghunath Bhatta greatly relished these duties, after approximately two months he was no longer re-

quired to do them, for at that time Shri Chaitanya had planned to return to His headquarters in Puri.

When Shri Chaitanya in fact did leave, young Raghunath Bhatta was heartbroken and he would constantly meditate on his loving interactions with Shri Chaitanya. His remembrance of their activities together gave him solace. As the years passed, Raghunath Bhatta's remembrance of Shri Chaitanya developed even further, transforming into an intense longing to be reunited with Him. He always hankered for the day when he would be old enough to travel to Puri, where he could serve the Lord continually.⁶

Approaching his twentieth year, Raghunath Bhatta (and a servant who carried his baggage) finally left Benares to go to Puri. On the way, Raghunath Bhatta decided to embark on a lengthy tour of Bengal, where he met an accountant named Ramdas. Although the accountant worked for the Muslim king, he was nonetheless learned in all of the Vedic scriptures and was a great devotee of Lord Ramachandra (Krishna's incarnation).⁷

Ramdas had renounced his attachment to this world and was departing for Puri to surrender his life to the Lord. Since Raghunath Bhatta and his servant were going to Puri as well—and for the same purpose—they decided to travel together. Ramdas insisted, however, that he be allowed to carry Raghunath Bhatta's baggage on his head, for he could detect that Raghunath Bhatta was an exalted devotee and, consequently, he wanted to serve him. Ramdas thus performed various duties in the service of Raghunath Bhatta, such as massaging his legs and seeing to his every need.

But Raghunath Bhatta was exceptionally humble, and he could not tolerate that another soul would deem him a fit recipient of service. "You are a respectable gentleman," Raghunath Bhatta told Ramdas, "and I see no reason why you should serve someone as fallen as myself. Let us just travel together in a happy mood."⁸

Ramdas replied: "I am a *shudra*, a very fallen soul. To serve a *brahmana* is my duty and religious principle. Therefore please do not be hesitant. I am naturally your servant, and when I serve you my heart becomes jubilant."⁹ Thus Ramdas continued to carry Raghunath Bhatta's baggage and serve him in various ways. While doing so, he constantly and enthusiastically chanted the holy name of Ramachandra.

Traveling in this way, they eventually arrived in Puri and met Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Raghunath Bhatta immediately fell at His lotus feet as a sign of humility. When he stood up, the Master embraced him, knowing well who he was. Shri Chaitanya then asked about the welfare of Tapan Mishra and Chandrashekhar. Raghunath Bhatta assured Him that they were well.

"It is good that you have come to Puri," Shri Chaitanya told Raghunath Bhatta. "Now go to the temple and see the lotus-eyed Lord Jagannath. Then you may come back and we will have lunch together." After this, Shri Chaitanya introduced him to all of the devotees, headed by Swarup Damodar, who arranged for the Goswami's proper accommodations.¹⁰

Shri Chaitanya showed Raghunath Bhatta special mercy on a daily basis, having lunch with

him, allowing him to do personal service, and teaching him the eternal truths of the Vedic literature. Since Raghunath Bhatta Goswami often cooked for Shri Chaitanya, the Goswami eventually became an expert chef. In fact, it is said that all of his preparations tasted like the nectar of the gods. Shri Chaitanya especially appreciated Raghunath Bhatta's cooking, and although the Master was generally selective in His eating habits, He would eat whatever the Goswami would make for Him. And after Shri Chaitanya ate to His full satisfaction, Raghunath Bhatta used to eat anything that was left on his Master's plate. In this way, Raghunath Bhatta showed the world how one can make great spiritual advancement by serving exalted souls and eating their remnants.

After eight months, Shri Chaitanya instructed Raghunath Bhatta to return home and, once in Benares, to faithfully serve his elderly parents. Seeing Raghunath Bhatta's advancement and proclivity toward renunciation, the Master asked him not to marry, for marriage would simply distract him from his goal. In addition, Shri Chaitanya told him to study the *Shrimad Bhagavatam* under a pure Vaishnava who has reached perfection in love of God. Instructing Raghunath Bhatta in this way, Shri Chaitanya took off His own neck-beads and lovingly placed them around Raghunath Bhatta's neck. Then He told Raghunath Bhatta: "One day you may come again to Puri." He then embraced Raghunath Bhatta, who began to cry.¹¹

Returning to Benares, Raghunath Bhatta carried out Shri Chaitanya's orders, faithfully serving his Vaishnava parents. And by hearing the *Shrimad*

Bhagavatam from a self-realized soul (who remains unknown), Raghunath Bhatta soon became a master of its recitation. In fact, service to his parents and absorption in the *Bhagavatam* became Raghunath Bhatta's life and soul for four years, until the day his parents departed from this world. With no family to keep him in Benares, he returned to Puri, attempting once again to become fully absorbed in the lotus feet of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

As previously, Raghunath Bhatta served Shri Chaitanya for eight months, but when this short period had elapsed he was once again sent away. This time, however, he was given his life's mission: "My dear Raghunath," said Shri Chaitanya, "go to Vrindavan. Follow My instructions and place yourself under the care of Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis. In Vrindavan, you should chant the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* and read *Shrimad Bhagavatam* continuously. In this way, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, will quickly bestow His mercy upon you."¹²

After saying this, Shri Chaitanya embraced Raghunath Bhatta and by the Lord's mercy Raghunath was enlivened with ecstatic love for Krishna. Then, Shri Chaitanya gave Raghunath Bhatta some unspiced betel nut (a species of pepper) and a huge garland of tulasi leaves that had been worn by Lord Jagannath. Raghunath Bhatta preserved these holy items and worshiped them as Shri Chaitanya's remnants.

With Shri Chaitanya's permission, Raghunath Bhatta then left Jagannath Puri and proceeded to Vrindavan. When he arrived there, he put himself under the care of Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis, who

were pleased with his exemplary behavior. Soon, Raghunath Bhatta took full shelter of Rupa Goswami's Govindadev Deity and eventually had several wealthy disciples construct a gorgeous temple in honor of Govinda. Raghunath himself prepared various ornaments for the Deity, including a flute and a set of earrings shaped like sharks. In addition, Raghunath Bhatta quickly endeared himself to all of the inhabitants of Vrindavan by his blissful recitation of the *Bhagavatam*.

Raghunath Bhatta Goswami used to sing the complicated *Bhagavatam* verses in three or four different melodies. At other times he recited the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*. He and his listeners would swoon with love of God whenever he began such recitations. It is said that sometimes the singing would abruptly stop, especially when Raghunath Bhatta, in a state of trance, started to exhibit ecstatic symptoms. Devotees would marvel at this display—tears, trembling, and faltering of the voice. The hairs of Raghunath Bhatta's body would stand on end (horripilation) and he would faint while experiencing the intensity of transcendental emotions.

Since Raghunath Bhatta Goswami was primarily known for his beautiful recitation of *Shrimad Bhagavatam*, the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to expounding upon the unique nature of that mammoth 18,000-verse scripture. The *Bhagavatam* is divided into twelve cantos, each representing a part of the Lord's body. The first two cantos are like His two lotus feet; the third and fourth cantos are compared to His thighs; the fifth canto represents His waist; the sixth, His chest; the seventh and eighth are His two strong arms; the ninth canto

is His neck; the special tenth canto, which deals with Krishna's intimate pastimes, is compared to His smiling face; the eleventh canto is His forehead; and the twelfth is His crown.

A vast and encyclopedic work, the *Bhagavatam* surveys a broad spectrum of knowledge in metaphysics, ontology, cosmology, epistemology, social stratification, political science, and psychology. The nineteenth-century American transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson once exalted the *Bhagavatam* as a book to be read "on one's knees."

According to the Chaitanyite Vaishnava tradition, the *Bhagavatam* is the essence of all Vedic wisdom.¹³ This is no small claim. Scholars have likened the Vedic literature to an unabridged dictionary while the other world scriptures are compared to pocket dictionaries. The Vedic literature gives the same information that is found in these other holy books, but it does so in greater detail. There are literally thousands upon thousands of Vedic texts, and they elucidate the deepest questions known to man. Thus, to say that the *Bhagavatam* is the cream of *these* literatures is to say that it is the most important theological work of all time. And Chaitanyite Vaishnavas accept it as such.

The spiritual process of crystallization that led to the *Bhagavatam's* greatness is instructive. Shrila Vyasadev (an incarnation of Krishna who was specifically deputed to compile the Vedic literature) put the eternal wisdom of the *Vedas* into written form some five thousand years ago. After this, he summarized the vast gamut of Vedic scriptures into a huge work known as the *Vedanta-sutra*. As the story goes, Vyas became despondent. He felt that in his

entire compilation of the Vedic literature, he had neglected to focus on the Absolute Truth. This was reaffirmed by his *guru*, Narada Muni, who told him that to become satisfied he needed to describe the name, fame, form, qualities, and pastimes of Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This would be the summit of Vedic learning. Following the orders of his *guru*, Vyasadev compiled *Shrimad Bhagavatam*, the mature fruit of the Vedic tree of knowledge, as a natural commentary upon the *Ve-danta-sutra*.

It is interesting that the *Bhagavatam* asserts its own uniqueness in the very beginning of its pages: *dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra*, "All so-called religiosity covered by fruitive intentions is completely rejected herein." (S.B. 1.1.2) Fruitive intentions take the shape of *kama* (gross and subtle sense gratification), *artha* (economic development), *dharma* (mundane religiosity or sectarianism), and even *moksha* (liberation).

These four goals are described as materialistic pursuits, and they despoil any attempt for true religion. The motivating force behind each of these is sensual aggrandizement. For example, an ordinary man may pursue religiosity (*dharma*) because he is actually in search of wealth (*artha*). Realizing that there is a Supreme Controller, he seeks to supplicate his "God" and in this way achieve his goal. This scenario, of course, is often insidious, and one absorbed in this sort of superficial religiosity frequently thinks of himself as a serious practitioner of spiritual life.

Upon reflection, however, it becomes evident that such a religionist is in actuality a mater-

ialist, for his whole pursuit of religion is directed toward the wrong end: acquiring wealth. Why does he want wealth? For *kama*, or sense gratification, a goal that is directly opposed to the principles of religion. Moreover, when one tires of this whole charade, he seeks *moksha*, or liberation. Unfortunately, *real* liberation could not be further away from such a cheated individual, for he has missed the whole point of the spiritual pursuit.

To one degree or another, this is the fate of Everyman. The *Bhagavatam*, however, exhorts its readers to go beyond this all-too-common state of affairs, beyond the illusions that trap even those who are well-intentioned. The student of the *Bhagavatam* must bid adieu to all mundane goals and reach for total purity. If one wants a lesser goal, he should approach a lesser scripture. The *Bhagavatam* is for those who are serious about the ultimate goal of life: love of God.

To fully understand *Shrimad Bhagavatam*, some historical background is in order. Although Vyasadev formed the Sanskrit codes with which we are today familiar, the original knowledge of the *Bhagavatam* is primordial. According to the *Bhagavatam* itself, it was initially revealed directly by God to Lord Brahma, the first created being. Brahma conveyed the essence of this knowledge to Narada, and Narada passed it on to Vyas. However, some five thousand years ago, there were three subsequent revelations in which the *Bhagavatam* became even sweeter, and the story behind these revelations is described in detail by Vyasadev himself.

In summary, the first of these *Bhagavatam* disclosures was made at Badarikashram, where Shri-

la Vyasadev, the compiler of the *Bhagavatam*, was the speaker, and his son, Shukadev Goswami, was the chief recipient. Then, the second time the *Bhagavatam* was recited, Shukadev Goswami was the speaker. He augmented that which he had heard from his father, making the *Bhagavatam* even more relishable for his student, Maharaj Parikit, and the thousands who gathered to listen. Finally, the third revelation took place in the forest of Naimisharanya (on the banks of the Gomati at modern Nimsar in Uttar Pradesh). Here, 60,000 sages headed by a saint named Shri Shaunak Rishi assembled and performed sacrifices for one thousand years. This they did in order to acquire the proper consciousness needed to understand *Shrimad Bhagavatam*.

Since this all took place thousands of years ago, the long lifespan required to perform a one-thousand-year sacrifice was not out of the question. According to literature left by many ancient cultures, man at one time had inordinate longevity. Even in the Bible, it is described that Adam lived for 930 years; Seth (Adam's son) lived 912 years; Enosh (Seth's son) lived 905 years; and so on, until Methuselah, who lived 969 years, the longest lifespan recorded in the Bible. After the flood, people lived for much shorter periods. Abraham, for example, lived only 175 years. Such traditional biblical information may be doubted, as might the information given in the *Bhagavatam*, but the possibility of greater lifespans than those to which we are accustomed cannot realistically be denied. There are insects that live only for a few moments by our calculation. Why is it not possible that we may live only for a few moments

according to the calculations of higher beings? Time is relative.

But for the 60,000 sages headed by Shri Shaunak Rishi, time was dedicated to the pursuit of the spirit. And so after one thousand years of elaborate Vedic sacrifices, they became the students of Shri Suta, who was a recipient of the second revelation mentioned above, the one in which Maharaj Parikit heard the *Shrimad Bhagavatam* from Shukadev Goswami.

Although these are the three primary instances of the *Bhagavatam's* revelation, it continued to be passed down in disciplic succession from master to disciple. In this way, the *Bhagavatam* became more and more concentrated, as molasses thickens and becomes rock candy. By the time of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the Six Goswamis, the inner truths of the *Bhagavatam* had burst forth like a volcano of the most refined nectar. The latest revelation can be seen in the translation and commentary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who judiciously takes the sweet nectar of the *Bhagavatam* and makes it widely available for the thirsty men and women of a godless age.

Having now understood something of the history of the *Bhagavatam* and how it was passed down in disciplic succession, it will be useful to have an overview of its contents. This will give some insight into why the Six Goswamis, and especially Raghunath Bhatta Goswami, chose this as their cardinal scripture and why this particular work is sufficient to bring both its orators and listeners to the highest state of spiritual perfection.

Aside from treating *sambandha*, *abhideya*, and *prayojana* in great detail, the *Bhagavatam* deals with ten basic subjects:

(1) **Sarga**: The first creation by God and the bringing forth of the five gross elements, the five objects of sense perception, the ten senses, the mind, intelligence, the false ego, and the total material energy (or the Universal Form). This picks up where the Bible leaves off. Information and details abound.

(2) **Visarga**: The secondary creation, or the work of Brahma, the first created being. Elaborate descriptions of Brahma's place in creation and how he manifests both moving and non-moving bodies according to the will of Krishna.

(3) **Sthana**: How the Lord maintains the universe by His multifarious potencies. God's energies are described as is the exact methodology by which they specifically assist Him in universal affairs.

(4) **Posana**: The special position of the devotees of the Lord. How they manifest Krishna's purpose in this world and how He reciprocates with them.

(5) **Uti**: The urge for creation or the cause of all inventions is explained according to the necessities of time, space, and objects. The concepts of time and space are also discus-

sed in detail—not only as they apply to our planetary system but how they apply to other planetary systems as well.

(6) **Manvantara:** The regulative principles of living beings. These are ascribed according to species, nature, quality, and work.

(7) **Ishanukatha:** Explicit information regarding the Personality of Godhead, His incarnations, and His interactions with His devotees. Also explained are the Lord's pastimes in His spiritual kingdom. This information is not found in any Western religious literature.

(8) **Nirodha:** The winding up of all energies employed in creation. Details of God's potencies are described with special attention to ontology and teleology.

(9) **Mukti:** Various types of liberation are described. These range from the cessation of material misery to perfection in love of God.

(10) **Ashraya:** The Ultimate End. The transcendence. The Summum Bonum. He from whom everything emanates is described in full. The activities of Krishna are the crown jewels of the *Bhagavatam's* brilliance.¹⁴

In the Second Canto of *Shrimad Bhagavatam*, there is a summary of the *Bhagavatam's* essential contents. Lord Brahma asked Shri Krishna four

questions, and Krishna replied with what eventually came to be known as the four nutshell verses of the *Bhagavatam*. Brahma asked: (1) What are the forms of the Lord, both in matter and in transcendence? (2) How are the different energies of the Lord working? (3) How does the Lord play with His different energies? and (4) How may Brahma be instructed to discharge the duty entrusted to him?

As a prelude to His answer, the Personality of Godhead said: "Knowledge about Me as described in the scriptures is very confidential, and it has to be realized in conjunction with devotional service. The necessary paraphernalia for that process is being explained by Me. You may take it up carefully.

"All of Me," Lord Shri Krishna continued, "namely My actual eternal form and My transcendental existence, color, qualities and activities—let all be awakened within you by factual realization, out of My causeless mercy." With this introduction, Brahma was ready to hear the four nutshell verses of the *Bhagavatam*: (1) "Brahma, it is I, the Personality of Godhead, who was existing before the creation, when there was nothing but Myself. Nor was there the material nature, the cause of this creation. That which you see now is also I, the Personality of Godhead, and after annihilation what remains will also be I, the Personality of Godhead. (2) O Brahma, whatever appears to be of any value, if it is without relation to Me, has no reality. Know it as My illusory energy, that reflection which appears to be in darkness. (3) O Brahma, please know that the universal elements enter into the cosmos and at the same time do not enter into the cosmos. Similarly, I Myself also exist within everything created, and at the

same time I am outside of everything. (4) A person who is searching after the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, must certainly search after this Truth to the fullest extent—in all circumstances, in all space and time, and both directly and indirectly.” All the secrets of the *Bhagavatam* are contained in these nutshell verses, at least in a seed-like form.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada comments on these four nutshell verses:

[From these verses] the missionary activities of Lord Chaitanya can be understood. *Shrimad Bhagavatam* has 18,000 verses, which are summarized in the four verses beginning with *aham evasam evagre* (text 33) and concluding with *yat syat sarvatra sarvada* (text 36). In the first of these verses (33) the transcendental nature of Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is explained. The second verse (34) further explains that the Lord is detached from the workings of the material energy, *maya*. The living entities, as parts and parcels of Lord Krishna, are prone to be controlled by the external energy because although they are spiritual, in the material world they are encased in bodies of material energy. The eternal relationship of the living entities with the Supreme Lord is explained in that verse. The next verse (35) instructs that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by His inconceivable energies, is simultaneously one with and dif-

ferent from the living entities and the material energy. This knowledge is called *achintya-bhedabheda-tattva*. When an individual living entity surrenders to Lord Krishna, he can then develop natural transcendental love for the Supreme Lord. This surrendering process should be the primary concern of the human being. In the next verse (36) it is said that a conditioned soul must ultimately approach a bona-fide spiritual master and try to understand perfectly the material and spiritual worlds and his own existential position. Here the words *anvaya-vyatirekabhyam*, "directly and indirectly," suggest that one must learn the process of devotional service in its two aspects: one must directly execute the process of devotional service and indirectly avoid the impediments to progress.¹⁶

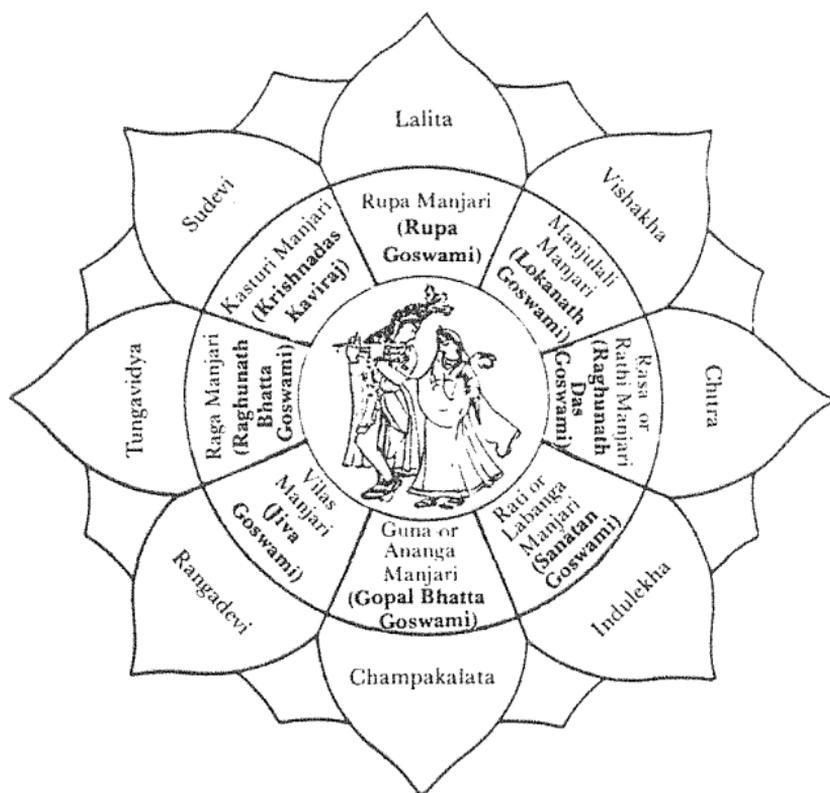
One cannot penetrate the mysteries of *Shrimad Bhagavatam* without the guidance of a spiritual master in disciplic succession, and so Chaitanya Mahaprabhu initially instructed Raghunath Bhatta to study it in this way. Having properly studied the *Bhagavatam*, however, Raghunath Bhatta came to take it as his life and soul, and it affected his entire being. When he recited or heard about the beauty and sweetness of Krishna, he would be overwhelmed with ecstatic love and become oblivious to everything else. Shрила Raghunath Bhatta never spoke about (nor would he listen to) mundane subjects. He was divinely intoxicated, hearing and talking about Krishna day and night.

And yet he was not neglectful of his surroundings. He did not have his head in the clouds, so to speak. Rather, being totally absorbed in Shri Krishna, the source of everything, he saw everything in its proper perspective—in relation to Krishna. Consequently, Raghunath Bhatta's love was all-embracing, for he loved Krishna and everything is related to Krishna. This is the view of a genuine saint, and it is easily adopted by the serious student of *Shrimad Bhagavatam*. This best of scriptures has the peculiar quality of saturating its reciters and listeners with profound love of God. This is the unique nature of *Shrimad Bhagavatam*. And readers are advised to follow in Raghunath Bhatta Goswami's footsteps by immersing themselves in its pages.

Notes

1. According to Kavi Karnapur's *Gaura-ganoddeshadipika*, op. cit., text 185, p. 112, Raghunath Bhatta Goswami is an incarnation of Raga-manjari.
2. S. K. De, *Early History of the Vaishnava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta, Firma KLM, reprint, 1986), p. 165.
3. Murari Gupta's *Kadcha* 4.1.14-17.
4. Govardhan Das, (in Bengali) *Sri Sri Vraja Dham O Sri Goswami Gana* (Calcutta, Pancanan Cattopadhyaya, 1961), Part III, p. 5.
5. Ibid.

6. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Antya-lila* 4, ch. 13, pp.119-183.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (trans.), *Shrimad Bhagavatam* (Los Angeles, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1972), First Canto, Vol. 1, text 2, pp. 52-3, purport.
14. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Adi-lila* 1, ch. 2, texts 91-2, pp. 145-6, purport.
15. *Shrimad Bhagavatam*, op. cit., Second Canto, Vol. 2, ch. 9, texts 31-6, pp. 175-196.
16. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Adi-lila* 1, ch. 1, text 56, p. 58, purport.



The Lotus is compared to Vrindavan, with Radha and Krishna in the center.

They are surrounded by their intimate manjaris (the Goswamis), and then by the eight principle *gopis*.

Afterword

In addition to being saints of the highest order, the Six Goswamis are *manjaris*. According to David Haberman, the word *manjari* itself is somewhat of a mystery.¹ Monier-Williams, author of *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, defines it as a “flower, bud, or shoot.”² More accurately, however, a *manjari* is literally a stamen—the part of a flower that is closest to its center. The definition fits in very neatly with the ontological position of the Six Goswamis. If Vrindavan is compared to a lotus flower, and Radha and Krishna are acknowledged as the center, then the *sakhis* may be compared to the petals and the *manjaris* to the stamens.

Manjari is a term that Chaitanyite Vaishnavas have come to use to describe the most intimate relationships that one may have with Krishna.

A *manjari* is a special kind of *gopi*, one that has access to Krishna's inner pastimes. More specifically, a *manjari* is a particular kind of female confidante (*sakhi*) to Radha. Such a *gopi* serves the highest aspirations of Radha and Krishna by tending to their needs during the Divine Couple's most intimate moments.

There are two categories of *gopis* that are counted among the *manjaris*: friends that are considered as close as life itself (*prana-sakhis*) and eternal friends (*nitya-sakhis*). It is sometimes said that *gopis* in these two categories have a special relationship with Radharani and are particularly conscious of tending to Her needs. Of course, by caring for Radha in this way, they obtain the special mercy of Shri Krishna.

The *manjari* is a beautiful young *gopi* who is resplendent with all charming qualities. She is always pre-pubescent or, at most, she is thirteen years old. This is so because according to the Vaishnava canon, this age is one of emotional intensity. The *manjari* is invariably characterized as an apprentice to primary *sakhis* such as Lalita or Vishakha.

In some ways, however, *manjaris* are considered superior to regular *sakhis*. For example, when Radha and Krishna desire to engage in their most intimate transcendental pastimes, the regular *sakhis* cannot gain entrance. They are required to leave. The *manjaris*, on the other hand, are allowed to stay due to the innocence and purity associated with their young age. In these private moments, the *manjaris* serve the needs of the Divine Couple. The types of service rendered by the *manjaris* include fetching water, serving betel nut, fanning them, combing and

braiding their hair, decorating their bodies, massaging their limbs, and entertaining them with music and dance.³ Thus, only the *manjari* witnesses and relishes the most intimate *lila* of the Lord.

Great Vaishnavas throughout history have sought to emulate the activities of the Six Goswamis in their *manjari-bhava*. Self-realization, in fact, consists of uncovering our *siddha-deha* ("spiritual body") and in this way tending to the needs of the Lord and His associates. Such an aspiration is poignantly expressed in the poetry of Narottam Das Thakur, a seventeenth-century saint who studied under Jiva Goswami. Narottam prays:

(1) The Divine Couple, Shri Radha and Krishna, are my life and soul. In life or death I have no other refuge but Them.

(2) In a forest of small *kadamba* trees on the bank of the Yamuna, I will seat the divine couple on a throne made of brilliant jewels.

(3) I will anoint Their dark and fair forms with sandalwood paste scented with *chuya*, and I will fan them with a *chamara* whisk. Oh, when will I behold Their moonlike faces?

(4) After stringing together garlands of *malati* flowers I will place them around Their necks, and I will offer *tambula* that is scented with camphor to Their lotus mouths.

(5) With the permission of all the *sakhis*, headed by Lalita and Vishaka, I will serve the lotus feet of Radha and Krishna.

(6) Narottam Das, the servant of the servant of Shri Krishna Chaitanya Prabhu, longs for this service to the divine couple.

As a student and inheritor of the Goswami legacy, Narottam Das clearly understood the esoteric import of his prayer. In another poem, he prayed quite directly to follow in the footsteps of Shri Rupa Manjari. This is the perfection of Krishna consciousness. As explained by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada:

Just as no one can understand...the Supreme Lord without His causeless mercy, no one can understand the transcendental sex life between Radha and Krishna without following in the footsteps of the damsels of Vraja [the *gopis*]. The personal associates of Radharani are called *sakhis*, and Her near assistants are called *manjaris*. It is very difficult to express their dealings with Krishna because they have no desire to mix with Krishna or to enjoy Him personally. Rather, they are always ready to help Radharani associate with Krishna. Their affection for Krishna and Radharani is so pure that they are simply satisfied when Radha and Krishna are together. Indeed, their transcendental pleasure is in seeing Shri Radha and Krishna united. The actual form of Radharani

is just like a creeper embracing the tree of Krishna, and the damsels of Vraja, the associates of Radharani, are just like the leaves and flowers of that creeper. When a creeper embraces a tree, the leaves and flowers as well as the creeper automatically embrace it. The *Govinda-lilamrita* (10.16) confirms that Radha is the expansion of the pleasure potency of Krishna and is compared with a creeper, and Her associates, the damsels of Vraja, are compared to the flowers and leaves of that creeper. When Radharani and Krishna enjoy themselves, the damsels of Vraja relish the pleasure more than Radharani Herself.

Although the associates of Radharani do not expect any personal attention from Krishna, Radharani is so pleased with them that She arranges individual meetings between Krishna and the damsels of Vraja. Indeed, Radharani tries to combine or unite Her associates with Krishna by many transcendental maneuvers, and She takes more pleasure in these meetings than in Her own meetings with Him. When Krishna sees that both Radharani and Her associates are pleased by His association, He becomes more satisfied. Such association and loving reciprocation have nothing to do with material lust, although it resembles the material union between man and woman. It is only because that similarity is there that such reciprocation is sometimes called, in transcendental

language, transcendental lust. As explained in the *Gautamiya-tantra* (B.r.s. 1.2.285): "Lust means attachment to one's personal sense gratification. But as far as Radharani and Her associates are concerned, they did not desire personal sense gratification for themselves. They *only* wanted to satisfy Shri Krishna.⁵

The Six Goswamis were also on this exalted level. Consequently, it can be understood that they were not ordinary souls but were, rather, the Lord's most intimate servitors who came to the world of birth and death in order to deliver the highest secrets of love of God.

Rupa Goswami = Rupa Manjari

Sanatan Goswami = Rati or Labanga Manjari

Gopal Bhatta = Ananga or Guna Manjari

Raghunath Bhatta = Raga Manjari

Raghunath Das = Rasa or Rati or Tulasi Manjari

Jiva Goswami = Vilas Manjari

To this list is often added Lokanath Goswami, who is said to be an incarnation of Manjulali Manjari (or Ananda Manjari), and Krishnadas Kaviraj, who is said to be an incarnation of Kasturi Manjari. Thus, there are eight stamens to accommodate the eight primary *gopis*, or the eight petals of the divine lotus flower.

Over the centuries, great Vaishnava scholars have progressively revealed more and more about this confidential *manjari-bhava*, especially in relation to the Six original Goswamis. In Dyanchandra's *Ar-*

chana-padati, for example, there is a wonderful revelation of Raghunath Das Goswami's ontological position: "To the south of Indulekha's lake, there is the *kunja* named Ratyambhuj ['Rati's lotus'], and this is the residence of the beautiful Rati Manjari. Her uncommon dress is adorned with luminous stars and her complexion looks just like thunderous lightning. She is mild and chaste, and some of her friends call her 'Tulasi.' She is thirteen years and two months old, and her father and mother are named Brishabha and Sarada respectively. Her husband is called Diva and her mother-in-law is called Sannika. Rati Manjari's primary service is to fan Radha and Krishna with a whisk, and in the age of Kali she appeared along with Gauranga Mahaprabhu as Shrila Raghunath Das Goswami." In this way, the Vaishnava sages have given us intimate details about the Six Goswamis.

All living souls are meant to assist in the intimate pastimes of these confidantes, either directly or indirectly. Conventional religion will not suffice in this regard. Such religion may serve to gradually uplift one from the lower modes of ignorance and passion, and may, at best, help to situate one in the all-auspicious mode of goodness. But only the process of devotional service (*bhakti-yoga*) as taught by a disciplic representative of the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan can awaken one's dormant *rasa* and reestablish him in his eternal relationship with Shri-Shri Radha and Krishna.

Notes

1. David L. Haberman, op. cit., p.189.

2. Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1899), p. 589.
3. The specific services rendered by *manjaris* are discussed by Narottam Das Thakur. See Niradprasad Nath (in Bengali), *Narottama Dasa O Tahar Racanavali* (Calcutta, University of Calcutta, 1975), pp. 307-53.
4. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (trans.), Narottam Das Thakur, "Sakhibrinde Vigyapati," in *Songs of the Vaishnava Acharyas* (Los Angeles, Calif., Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1976), p. 48.
5. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Teachings of Lord Chaitanya* (Los Angeles, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, reprint, 1974), pp. 331-2.

Appendix

THE INNER MEANING OF LORD CHAITANYA'S DESCENT

*shri chaitanya mano bhishtam stapitam yena bhutale,
svayam rupa kada mayam dadati sva padanti kam*

What is the inner meaning or inner desire (“*mano bhishtam*”) of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu? Why does He appear in this world? What does He seek to accomplish? And how does it affect us? More important for our present study—how were these teachings elaborated upon by the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan? These are deep questions, and in an attempt to give answers I will only be able to briefly summarize the information at my disposal. This is largely due to my own deficit of realization and knowledge. Of course, a basic understanding of why God descends into the material world is given in one of the most fundamental parts of the Vedic literature, *Bhagavad-gita*: “Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice and a predominant rise of irreligion—at that time I descend. To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to

reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium.” (Bg. 4.7-8)

Tradition teaches that the Lord does not have to directly punish the miscreant class of men—they pose no real threat to the Lord or His mission. God does not have to come to this world to curtail their impious behavior. Irreligious people cause their own undoing. Such miscreants are conditioned to sinful life, and although their misdeeds may sometimes have only minimal effect in the beginning, sin will ultimately take its toll on them. Still, when the demonic element reaches epidemic proportions, the Lord descends to help them, for they are merely victims of *dharmasya glanib*—irreligion. Such help is a manifestation of the Lord's compassion.

The central reason for the Lord's appearance, however, is to deliver the pious, to bring pleasure to His devotees. Krishna and His pure devotees enjoy a reciprocal relationship. They are bound in love. The devotees act for Krishna and Krishna acts for His devotees. It may even be said that Krishna is the devotee of His devotees.

This principle reaches perfection in Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who appears as God in the guise of the perfect devotee. It is said that in this particular form the Lord appears for two distinct reasons of His own, one external and one internal. The external reason was simply to inaugurate the *yuga-dharma*, or the prescribed method of God realization for the current epoch in world history. This prescribed method is *Hari-nam-sankirtan*, or “the congregational chanting of God's holy name and the distribution of this name to others.”

Promulgation of this *sankirtan* mission is specifically noted in *Navadvip-lila*, or the Lord's early pas-

times. Although Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the topmost combined expression of Radha and Krishna's love, here, in Navadvip, Mahaprabhu primarily played the role of *yuga-avatar*, establishing among the prominent Vaishnavas of Navadvip the appropriate method of meditation for the age: congregational chanting. In Navadvip-*lila*, moreover, He manifested the traditional role of *avatar*, revealing many celestial forms and miraculous deeds. In this way He unequivocally displayed His divine status, at least for His intimate associates. However, this was merely His secondary role. During this early Navadvip period, His primary identity as Shrimati Radharani had remained largely suppressed, and it was instead mainly exhibited by Gadadhar Pandit (His intimate associate). Later, in Puri, Mahaprabhu was totally gripped by Radha-*bhava*, while Shri Jagannath, the Deity, was Krishna Himself.

But it was in Navadvip that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu first manifested His strong desire ("*mano bhishitam*") to spread the *sankirtan* movement, with its concomitant message of love of God, throughout every town and village of the world. Although the people of this world did not fully realize this inundation until the twentieth century—until the time of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada—the process was masterfully inaugurated by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Himself, who, in the sixteenth century, personally succeeded in spreading the *sankirtan* movement throughout the Indian subcontinent and set up the substantial philosophical and cultural foundation to spread it throughout the universe.

Mahaprabhu preached His doctrine of divine love with great fervor and vitality. In fact, His form is the

embodiment of this love, manifested by Lord Krishna's internal desire to experience the spiritual love of His greatest devotees (particularly Shrimati Radharani, the Lord's divine pleasure potency). This, it is said, is the internal reason for Mahaprabhu's descent: By personally taking on the mood and complexion of Shrimati Radharani, Krishna desired to taste the love that Radharani has for Him. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the highest expression of this experience.

Actually, this internal reason for Mahaprabhu's descent is broken down into three related subdivisions:

(1) Krishna wanted to experience the greatness or depth of Radharani's love for Him.

(2) He wanted to experience the sweetness of this love from Radharani's perspective.

(3) He wanted to experience the distinct bliss that Radharani achieves by virtue of engaging in His service.

These three internal reasons for Mahaprabhu's descent, in turn, reflect three unfulfilled desires that were previously experienced by Krishna when He descended to Vrindavan. (1) In *Krishna-lila*, Krishna was the subject and Radha was the object. Although their love was unfathomable, they were still "separated," that is to say: they were in two distinct bodies. Consequently, Krishna's intense desire to fully taste (*asvada*) Radharani's love for Him (*prema*) remained unfulfilled. The only way in which Krishna could fully taste this love was to Himself become Radha. This

He did as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. (2) A subtle variation on this is seen in the second unfulfilled desire: Krishna wanted to experience the untold sweetness of Radha's love for Him. Again, this required amalgamating Himself into Radharani's essential personhood (*radhika svarup*). If He were able to see things from Her inconceivable perspective, He would perhaps be able to understand Her unmotivated and unending love for Him. (3) Krishna appreciated that Her love was essentially embodied in Her service to Him, and so His third unfulfilled desire was to fully engage in such spontaneous service (*krishna-prema-seva*). In order to fulfill this, as well as His other two unfulfilled desires, Krishna would have to assume the emotional reality of a devotee (*bhakta bhava*). In particular, again, He would have to *become* Shrimati Radharani, who tastes the highest essence of a devotee's love (*mahabhava*). These unfulfilled desires are perfectly fulfilled in the manifestation of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

It may be argued that God (Krishna) is already omniscient, and if this is so then He should not have to make some extraneous endeavor to realize these internal truths about His own self-existent nature. The Vaishnava response to this, however, is that Mahaprabhu is *not* an extraneous manifestation. Rather, He is an alternate feature of the original Personality of Godhead. Thus, Krishna's descent as Mahaprabhu is merely an expression of the methodology by which He realizes the sweetness of His devotee's love. It is not that the Lord has to make an external endeavor—Mahaprabhu is that eternal form of the Lord by which He internally experiences these esoteric truths. In essence, the manifestation of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu teaches us some-

thing confidential about nothing less than the nature of God's experience.

But Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami takes us even farther. In his *Shri Chaitanya-charitamrita*, he adds another dimension to the Lord's internal reason for descending upon our earthly realm:

*prema-rasa-niryasa karite asvadana
ragamarg bhakti loka karite pracharana*

*rasika-shekhara krishna parama-karuna
ei dui hetu haite ich-hara udgama*

“The Lord's desire to appear was born from two reasons,” says Shрила Kaviraj Goswami, “He wanted to taste the sweet essence of the mellows of love of God (as exhibited by Shrimati Radharani), and He wanted to propagate devotional service in the world on the platform of spontaneous attraction (*raganuga*). Thus He is known as supremely jubilant and as the most merciful of all.”¹

These two internal reasons are described as the *mula-karana* or the “main causes” of Shri Chaitanya's descent. Having described something of Krishna's desire to experience the love of Radharani, I will now focus on the second, often neglected internal reason for His descent, namely, to establish the glorious path of *raganuga-bhakti*. For sincere practitioners of devotional service, this path is approached with as much caution as with enthusiasm, since its coveted and difficult-to-achieve goal is to reawaken our lost relationship with Krishna by emulating a *ragatmika-bhakta*, or “an eternally perfected being in the Kingdom of God.” Consequently, a prudent word of caution should be offered at this point: few in

this day and age have the honesty and spiritual acumen to execute this path properly. Therefore, great contemporary *acharyas*, such as Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur and Shrila Prabhupada, have recommended a slow, methodical progression, following the rules and regulations of scripture (*viddhi-bhakti*), as the path most suitable for the mass of people.

Although often subtle and inadvertent, the cheating propensity is a factor in many people's spiritual lives, and so the common accoutrements of *raganuga-bhakti*, such as the *siddha-pranali* process of initiation and living near Radha-kund [a most sacred holy place], are generally discouraged by the wise representatives of the genuine disciplic lineages. This is not because these elements of *raganuga-bhakti* are necessarily wrong—They are not wrong!—but because they are generally embraced by those who are not ready for such an advanced stage of spiritual life. In fact, sages have declared that those who prematurely live near the blissful Radha-kund, or the “lake of Radha,” will instead experience the terrible Narakakund, or the dreaded “lake of hell.”² Nonetheless, when one actually reaches the level of *raganuga*, he is fulfilling the real *mano-bhishtam*, or internal desire, of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu: That we gradually attain to the level of spontaneous attraction.

In Shrila Prabhupada's purport to the above verse from *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, he says, “Lord Krishna wants to make known to all the conditioned souls that He is more attracted by *raga-bhakti* than *viddhi-bhakti*, or devotional service under scheduled regulations.” Here, Shrila Prabhupada makes clear that although *raga-bhakti* is indeed confidential, *all conditioned souls* should be taught of its practice and purpose. In this way, they will be aware of the ultimate

goal of life. Moreover, Prabhupada's comment is not meant to minimize the importance of *viddhi-bhakti*, which consists of rigid discipline, rules, regulations, and worship of the Lord in awe and reverence. Although the path of *raganuga* is not dependent on any prerequisite, a *raganuga-bhakta* will not neglect *viddhi*, as exemplified by the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan. But the ultimate goal should be clear as well.

Some, in fact, are eternal *viddhi-bhaktas*, but their destination is Vaikuntha-*dharma*. They do not go to Krishna's supreme abode, Goloka, where spontaneity, sweetness, and love reign supreme. Because they are inclined to awe and reverence, they go to the transcendental kingdom where the Lord is lovingly worshipped in that way.

To emphasize this point, the Lord says, "All the universe is filled with the conception of My majesty, but love weakened by that sense of majesty does not satisfy Me. If one regards Me as the Supreme Lord and himself as a subordinate, I do not become subservient to his love, nor can it control Me. According to the transcendental emotion (*bhava*) in which My devotee worships Me, I reciprocate with him. That is My natural behavior."³

The goal is to become aware of our eternal relationship with the Lord—re-enter that relationship—and please Him in that way. This is done through the process of Krishna consciousness. According to Rupa Goswami [*Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu*, 1.2.1], Krishna consciousness evolves through three steps: (1) *Sadhana-bhakti*, devotion in practice; (2) *bhava-bhakti*, devotion in ecstasy; (3) and *prema-bhakti*, devotion in pure love of God. It should be noted that *sadhana-bhakti* is further divided into *viddhi* and *raganuga*, and unless one graduates to the *raganuga* part

of *sadhana-bhakti*, as stated earlier, the highest level of Krishna consciousness is not generally attained.

When one does evolve to the level of *raganuga*, however, then the “*bhava*” referred to earlier has an opportunity to fully manifest and one's direct relationship (*rasa*) with Krishna becomes clear. This relationship may be one of the following: (1) *shanta-rasa*, a relationship of tranquility or neutrality; (2) *dasya-rasa*, servitude; (3) *sakhya-rasa*, friendship; (4) *vatsalya-rasa*, parental affection; and (5) *madhurya-rasa*, or amorousness: the intimate relationship of conjugal love. These are all based on the *sthayi-bhava*, or permanent relationship, of love for Krishna.

But Chaitanya Mahaprabhu specifically came to introduce what may be called “a unique” *sthayi-bhava*: In addition to the above *rasas*, He revealed *Bhavollas-rati*, or that state wherein one's love for Radharani supersedes one's love for Krishna [see *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu*, 2.5.128]. Many prominent Vaishnava authorities—such as Gopal Guru Goswami (Mahaprabhu's intimate associate), Dyanchandra Goswami (Shri Gopal Guru's disciple) and Narottam Das Thakur—brought out the special significance of *Bhavollas-rati*, which they described as *Manjari-bhava*, or the mood of a very special class of *gopi* (i.e., Krishna's greatest devotees, the village cowherd girls).

To clarify *Bhavollas-rati*, or *Manjari-bhava*, I will make a brief survey of these most confidential devotees—the *gopis*—and then explicitly identify the particular class who are especially given to this *Manjari-bhava*.

First, we have the *parama-preshtha-sakhis* (“most dear friends”). These are Radharani's most intimate associates—the eight principle *gopis*. They are La-

lita, Vishakha, Chitra, Champakalata, Rangadevi, Sudevi, Indulekha, and Tungavidya. These eight *gopis*, though friends of Radharani, also have intimacy with Krishna, and sometimes, Radharani Herself selflessly arranges their pastimes with the Lord of Her heart.

Next are the *priya-sakhis*, who are subordinate to the primary eight and serve their every need. There are sixty-four of these particular *gopis*, and they are divided into eight groups of eight—one group for each primary *gopi*. But they also have their own encounters with Krishna. There are innumerable other *gopis*, too, known generally as the *sakhis*, who have similar experience. Either they love Krishna intensely (*Krishna-snehadhika*), or they love Radha and Krishna equally (*sama-snehadhika*).

The *prana-sakhis* and the *nitya-sakhis*, however, are an extraordinary group of *gopis*. Their love for Radharani stands supreme (*Bhavollas-rati*), and it is so intense that they desire only to push Her toward Krishna, with no consideration for their own relationship with Him. This is Manjari-bhava. Even if Radharani insists, such a *manjari* will not go to Krishna. This is her determination. She is selfless. Krishna belongs only to Radha! And she will do whatever is necessary to bring Them together. Her primary concern is for Radhika (*Radha-snehadhika*).

Of course, the *manjaris* are ultimately the most fortunate of all *gopis*, and they are not without reward for their sense of ultimate detachment. As stated by Shrila Prabhupada:

It is very difficult to express their [the *manjaris*'] dealings with Krishna because they have no desire to mix with Krishna or to

enjoy Him personally. Rather, they are always ready to help Radharani associate with Krishna. Their affection for Krishna and Radharani is so pure that they are simply satisfied when Radha and Krishna are together. Indeed, their transcendental pleasure is in seeing Radha and Krishna united. The actual form of Radharani is just like a creeper embracing the tree of Krishna, and the damsels of Vraja, the associates of Radharani, are just like the leaves and flowers of that creeper. When a creeper embraces a tree, the leaves and flowers as well as the creeper automatically embrace it. *Govinda-lilamrita* (10.16) confirms that Radharani is the expansion of the pleasure potency of Krishna and is compared with a creeper, and Her associates, the damsels of Vraja, are compared to the flowers and leaves of that creeper. When Radharani and Krishna enjoy Themselves, the damsels of Vraja relish the pleasure more than Shrimati Radharani Herself...⁴

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to give all living entities the opportunity to experience Manjari-bhava, the state of selfless service to Shrimati Radharani (which is also known as *Radha-dasyam*). The ecstasy associated with such spiritual selflessness exceeds that of Radharani Herself, as stated above. This is Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's greatest and most confidential gift to humanity.

And Radharani Herself is not devoid of this pleasure. In fact, Her chief ecstasies come from trying to

arrange meetings between Krishna and the primary *gopis*. As Shрила Prabhupada says:

Although the associates of Radharani do not expect any personal attention from Krishna, Radharani is so pleased with them that She arranges individual meetings between Krishna and the damsels of Vraja. Indeed, Radharani tries to combine or unite Her associates with Krishna by many transcendental maneuvers, and She takes much more pleasure in these meetings than in Her own meetings with Him. When Krishna sees that both Radharani and Her associates are pleased by His association, He becomes more satisfied. Such association and loving reciproca-tion have nothing to do with material lust, although it resembles the material union between man and woman. It is only because that similarity is there that such reciproca-tion is sometimes called, in transcendental language, transcendental lust. As explained in *Gautamiya-tantra* (B.r.s., 1.2.285): 'Lust means attachment to one's personal sense gratification. But as far as Radharani and Her associates are concerned, they did not desire personal sense gratification. They only wanted to satisfy Krishna.'⁵

In this context, "transcendental lust" chiefly refers to the love of the principle *gopis*, and the *manjaris* assist those who are given to this spiritual "lust." *Raganuga-bhakti*, being modeled on *ragatmika*, is generally divided into two categories: the followers of those with "transcendental lust" (*kamanuga*), who

are solely in *madhurya-rasa*, and the followers of those who relish "relational *bhakti*" (*sambandhanuga*), who may be engaged in any of the five *rasas* but who are not given to the special "lustful" brand of *madhurya* under discussion. This is elaborately explained in Shрила Rupa Goswami's *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu* (1.2.290). The highest level, says Shри Rupa, is the path of *kamanuga*, the path of the *gopis*, and this topmost path is actually facilitated by those in Manjari-bhava. Consequently, Manjari-bhava is seen as the preeminent position.

Gaudiya Vaishnavas are distinct among Vaishnavas of the other *sampradayas* in their pursuance of Manjari-bhava, although the Nimbarkis, Ballabhis, and Harivangshis have touched on the subject. Following in the footsteps of exemplary *manjaris* is natural for those in the line of Mahaprabhu, for this was Lord Chaitanya's unique contribution. The original Six Goswamis were themselves manifestations of six primary *manjaris*, as were Lokanath Goswami, Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami, and many of the great *acharyas* in the Vaishnava line.

The scriptural basis alluding to Manjari-*sadhana* can be traced to the Padma Purana, while implicit instructions can be found in Raghunath Das Goswami's *Vilapa-kusumanjali*. It is also referred to in Rupa Goswami's *Stavamala*. Dhyanchandra's *Archana-padhati* elaborates on this theme, and Narottam Das Thakur develops it in a systematic sense. Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur, too, in both his *Krishna-bhavanamrita* and his *Raga Bartma Chandrika*, deals with the subject at some length.

Bhaktivinode Thakur wrote about it extensively: Chapter Fifteen of *Harinam Chintamani* (entitled "Bhajan Pranali") gives details about the fundamen-

tal basis of Manjari-*sadhana*, i.e., *raganuga-bhakti*; in *Jaiva Dharma*, the two heroes of the story meet with Gopal Guru Goswami and Dhyanchandra who in Chapter Twenty-six give preliminary details about *raganuga bhakti* and allude to Manjari-*sadhana*. Further, in Shрила Bhaktivinode Thakur's "Siddhi-lalasa" (which is part of his lengthier work entitled *Gita-Mala*), he specifically deals with Manjari-bhava and mentions his own form as a *manjari* in the spiritual world (where he is known as Kamala Manjari). So there is ample literature on the subject in the orthodox Gaudiya Vaishnava line.

June McDaniel, assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the College of Charleston in South Carolina, elaborates on the nature of Manjari-*sadhana*, or the practice of those who desire to follow in the footsteps of the *manjaris*:

In the Vrindavan-*lila*, the person visualizes himself as inwardly female, a handmaiden (*manjari*) to Radha. This body is twelve or thirteen years old, wearing a certain color *sari*, in a certain residence, with a particular type of service, following the guidance of a handmaiden who is already a part of the paradise. This more experienced woman explains the details of service to Radha and Krishna to the newcomer. In addition to this information, the disciple must memorize the layout of the heavenly Vrindavan: he must learn the location of Radha's house, her village, Krishna's house and village, Radha-kunda (the pond in the forest where Radha and Krishna meet), and the locale of the var-

ious bowers around Radha-kunda. Elaborate diagrams of all these localities are kept by Vaishnava *gurus* who specialize in teaching such visualization. Once this is learned, the disciple must learn the eternal activities of Radha and Krishna. This set of activities is divided into the eight times that divide the twenty-four-hour day. At each of these times, Radha and Krishna have a specific action which the disciple must visualize in his spiritual body. He must fit himself, with his visualized body and service, into the appropriate scene.⁶

The “eight times that divide a twenty-four-hour day” concept, known as “*ashta-kaliya-lila*,” will be addressed later. Before discussing this, however, it would be prudent to note that Mahaprabhu Himself was given to Manjari-bhava, and there is evidence of this in several episodes depicted in *Chaitanya-charitamrita*. In *Antya* 4 (pp.240-3), for instance, Mahaprabhu says to Swarup Damodar: “Who has brought Me here from Govardhan Hill? I was seeing Lord Krishna's pastimes, but now I cannot see them...Hearing the vibration of Krishna's flute, Shrimati Radharani and all Her *gopi* friends came there to meet Him. They were all very nicely dressed. When Krishna and Shrimati Radharani entered a cave together, the other *gopis* asked Me to pick some flowers...” Here, Mahaprabhu is not acting as Radha or Krishna, but, rather, He is experiencing the ecstasy of Manjari-bhava.

This is seen again in *Antya* 5 (pp. 88-91), where Mahaprabhu, again talking to Swarup Damodar, says: “After hearing the vibration of the flute, I went

to Vrindavan, and there I saw that Krishna, the son of Maharaj Nanda, was playing on His flute in the pasturing grounds. He brought Shrimati Radharani to a bower by signalling with His flute. Then He entered that bower to perform pastimes with Her. I entered the bower just behind Krishna, My ears captivated by the sound of His ornaments. I saw Krishna and the *gopis* enjoying all kinds of pastimes while laughing and joking together. Hearing their vocal expressions enhanced the joy of My ears..." This, too, is in the mood of Manjari-bhava, for Mahaprabhu is acting as neither Radhika nor Krishna but rather as one who is merely delighted to see Them enjoying together. Finally, Narottam Thakur has concluded in his *Ragamala* that Mahaprabhu is in the mood of a *manjari*.

Having established that *raganuga-bhakti*—and its concomitant Manjari-bhava—was a central reason (the inner reason!) for Shri Chaitanya's descent, there is an urgent point that needs to be addressed. How does one find entrance into *raganuga-bhakti-sadhana*? What are the dangers and pitfalls? Where does one begin?

Very simply, one must begin by approaching a bona-fide spiritual master and inquiring from him submissively. One should also render menial service to the spiritual master according to the rules and regulations of scripture. This is called *viddhi* (or *vaidhi*)-*bhakti*. One must learn to hear and chant Krishna's name—Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare—under the guidance of this spiritual master as well. In the beginning, especially, it is the holy name—and not remembrance of Krishna per se—that leads us to perfection.

In *viddhi-bhakti*, the devotee is called upon to submit to higher authority and to perform various acts of service to Shri Krishna in this way. Although the process of surrender begins at this stage, one is still largely functioning according to one's bodily identity and has not yet modeled himself (or herself) after an inhabitant of Vraja. Through prescribed devotional activity and association, however, the practitioner becomes familiar with Vaishnava behavior and scripture, including the pastimes of Krishna and His associates. By prolonged exposure, one remembers his eternal constitutional position and becomes re-established in his real identity, divorced from the illusions associated with the body and mind of this world. The practitioner becomes cured of "amnesia," as it were, and begins to recollect his original life in the kingdom of God.

David Haberman, Assistant Professor of Religion at Williams College, elaborates:

The Vaidhi Bhakti practitioner is required to frequently listen to (*charitra-shravana*), remember (*smarana*), sing about (*lila-kirtan*), meditate on (*krida-dhyana*), and otherwise celebrate the stories of the Vraja-lila. These exercises familiarize the practitioner with the world of Vraja and the characters who inhabit it. Staged dramas (such as the *rasa-lilas*) are also a favorite means of making the world of Vraja-lila objectively available to the interested community. Here the *bhakta* [devotee] as spectator is presented with a vivid expression of the ultimate world of Vraja, which can provide an aesthetic foretaste of and a powerful incentive for further pursuit of

that world. The practitioner of Vaidhi Bhakti, continually studying the Vaishnava scriptures that narrate the *Vraja-lila*, moreover, is like an actor learning the script of a drama to be enacted...A study of Raganuga-bhakti-sadhana will demonstrate that there is in fact such a formula, and that it is as follows: one enters the religious reality by assuming, via role-taking, an identity located within that reality. The new identity is the vehicle to the new reality. Close attention, then, should be given to role-systems and the ritual structures devised by religious traditions to construct new identities for concerned individuals, thereby transporting them to a new concomitant reality...Gaudiya Vaishnavas claim that a new identity is the entrance pass to the highest reality of Krishna's play.⁷

The follower of *vaidhi-bhakti* may gradually develop *lobha* ("internal desire") or even *lauilyam* ("greediness") for higher attainments, and this is the beginning of *raganuga-bhakti-sadhana*. Having passed through the levels of *sraddha* ("firm faith"), *sadbh-sangha* ("the desire to associate with like-minded devotees"), *bhajana-kriya* ("the point of serious meditation, commitment, and usually of initiation"), and *anartha-nivritti* ("the slow demise of one's unwanted habits"), one can achieve the state of *lobha* or *lauilyam* at the stage of *nistha*, or "transcendental steadiness," and one may even achieve it prior to this level. (But Shrila Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur seems certain that it begins from *nistha*. For evidence, see his *Bhakti-sara-pradarshini*, 1.3.7).

At whatever stage one feels such longings, however, one would do well to approach his spiritual master and ask for pertinent instructions in this regard. If one is indeed ready, the *guru* will give specific information in regard to a disciple's *siddha-deha*, or one's perfected form in the spiritual world. This may reflect any number of relationships, but for Gaudiya Vaishnavas, especially, this generally refers to Manjari-bhava. Bhaktivinode Thakur has even said, quoting Dhyanchandra Goswami's famous *Archana-padhati*, that Gaudiya Vaishnavas tend to have two spiritual forms: a male form in Chaitanya-*lila* and a female (*manjari*) form in Krishna-*lila*.

The danger, of course, is for those who are not ready. Thus, in India, there is a preponderance of *prakrita-sahajiyas*, or those who take cheaply these teachings (making a trite imitative show). It is easy to cheat, but one will then miss the benefits of true spiritual life. One will only be cheating oneself. Naturally the safest path is *vaidhi-bhakti-sadhana*, only moving forward when one has the blessings of the *guru*. Even then, it must be practiced in strict confidence, since it is, even fundamentally, an esoteric and deeply internal process.

In fact, contrary to popular belief, it is an inner meditation. *Raganuga-bhakti* does not require one to dress as a *gopi*, for instance, and to externally show signs of ecstasy, although this is the hallmark sign of a *prakrita-sahajiya*. A true *raganuga-bhakta* would strictly continue his discipline as if he were an ideal *vaidhi-bhakta*.

But his inner meditation would be different, and to practice genuine meditation in this way on one's *siddha-deha*, especially if one is in *madhurya-rati*, there are eleven items (*eka-dasha bhava*) of which one

must be aware: name, relationship, age, body color, group, dress, order, residence, service, highest desire or expectation, and under whom one serves. Again, this does not refer to one's outer bodily appearance but to one's actual spiritual existence in the kingdom of God. The minutiae of this existence is revealed by the *guru* and is enhanced by inner meditation.

The mental *sadhana* of the *raganuga-bhakta* chiefly involves a meditative technique called *lila-smaranam*. This *smaranam*, or "remembrance" (or even "visualization") is at the heart of *raganuga-bhakti-sadhana*. Shrila Prabhupada comments on *lila-smaranam* in *Krishna Book*:

They [the residents of Vrindavan] were thinking 'Krishna was playing in this way. Krishna was blowing His flute. Krishna was joking with us, and Krishna was embracing us.' This is called *lila-smarana*, and it is the process of association with Krishna most recommended by great devotees; even Lord Chaitanya enjoyed *lila-smarana* association of Krishna when He was at Puri. Those who are in the most exalted position of devotional service and ecstasy can live with Krishna always by remembering His pastimes. Shrila Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur has given us a transcendental literature entitled *Krishna-bhavanamrita*, which is full with Krishna's pastimes. Devotees can remain absorbed in Krishna thought by reading such books. Any book of Krishna-*lila*, even this book, *Krishna*, and our *Teachings of Lord Chaitan-*

ya, is actually a solace for devotees who are feeling separation from Krishna.⁸

The *Krishna-bhavanamritam*, among other books referred to by Shrila Prabhupada, takes us beyond a general remembrance of Krishna's pastimes, and it outlines *lila-smaranam* more specifically, with special attention to the remembrance of the eight-part-day division in Vrindavan (*ashta-kaliya-lila*), which was mentioned earlier. Shrila Prabhupada directly mentions this phenomenon in his translation to Text 10 of the *Upadeshamrita*, although the words "*ashta-kaliya-lila*" cannot be found in the Sanskrit text itself. By this, Prabhupada is obviously bringing out the internal meaning of the text, which promotes *lila-smaranam*. Although Prabhupada rarely mentions this sort of thing directly, references to it can be found sprinkled throughout his books and recorded conversations. Implicitly, then, it *is* a part of the Gaudiya tradition and it is endorsed for advanced disciples.

This *ashta-kailya-lila* is presented as a short poem by Rupa Goswami in his *Ashta kaliya lila smarana mangala stotram* ("Auspicious Praise of the Remembrance of Divine Activity Divided into Eight Time Periods") and it is directly based on the "*Patata khanda*" of the Padma Purana. Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur revealed an inner meaning to *ashta-kaliya-lila*, wherein the practice could be applied to the remembrance of Mahaprabhu's pastimes in Navadvip. Shrila Bhaktivinode Thakur also elaborated upon the eight-times-of-the-day principle to include Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in his classic work *Shriman Mahaprabhu Ashta-kaliya-lila smarana-mangala-stotram*.

To practice *lila-smaranam* in the fullest sense of the term, one must know his *siddha-deha* and be able to envision this original spiritual form. As stated earlier, the day in Goloka Vrindavan is divided into eight parts, and according to the details of scripture and the predecessor *acharyas*, one enters into a particular meditation according to an average day in Vraja. The meditation is quite complex and requires the level of concentration that only an accomplished devotee could achieve. There are three practical guidebooks in this regard: *Krishna-bhavanamrita*, which has already been mentioned, Kavi Karnapur's *Krishnahnika-kaumudi*, and, most significantly, Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami's *Govinda-lilamrita*.

Using *Govinda-lilamrita*, Vrindavan historian Alan Entwistle delivers an extremely abbreviated, if also eloquent, summarization of *ashta-kaliya-lila*:

In his *Govinda-lilamrita*, Krishnadas Kaviraj declares that the purpose of the work is to inspire devotees to contemplate the various pastimes of Krishna and Radha as they take place throughout the day. He begins the cycle with the first watch (*pratah*) when Vrinda [a prominent *gopi*] calls upon the birds to wake Krishna and Radha, who have been sleeping together after meeting at night to dance the *rasa*. They emerge dishevelled from the bower, return to their respective homes, and creep into bed before the rest of the household awakes. During the second watch (*purvahna*) Purnamasi [She is the saintly go-between and the grandmother of Krishna's brahmin friend and confidante, Madhu-mangal] visits Nanda's house in or-

der to see Krishna wake up. She notices the marks caused by his love-play with Radha, but assumes that they are the result of his having wrestled playfully with Balaram [Krishna's elder brother] before falling asleep. Krishna gets up, plays with the other boys, and goes to milk the cows, while Radha is woken by her mother-in-law [Jatila, Abhimanyu's mother] and begins her daily routine. During the third watch (*madhyahna*) Krishna goes out into the forest to graze the cattle while Radha and the *Sakhis* go to worship Surya. Radha's mother-in-law had encouraged the *Sakhis* to take her with them in order to keep her occupied because she suspected that Krishna would attempt to meet her. Nevertheless, they do meet each other in the forest and during the fourth watch (*aparahna*) amuse themselves on the banks of the Radha-kunda. After playing in a swing and frolicking in the water of the lake, Radha returns home, and Krishna, during the fifth watch (*sayahna*), brings the cattle back to the village while playing his flute. During the sixth watch (*pradosha*) Krishna and Radha eat their evening meal and look at each other from the gazebos of their respective homes. During the seventh watch (*naisha/madhyaratri*) everyone goes to sleep and Krishna and Radha steal away for their tryst in Vrindavan. During the eighth watch (*nishanta*) they dance on the banks of the Yamuna, frolic in the water, and finally retire to the bower.⁹

The experienced Vaishnava reader will notice several technical problems in scholar Entwistle's synopsis. *Nishanta* is actually the first watch, and so the list of watches are off. And Purnamasi is not the one who notices the marks on Krishna's body—it is Mother Yashoda. But these points are too fundamental and esoteric to explore here. As a general overview, with specifics deleted, Entwistle's work is fine, at least as an introduction. Moreover, learned and observant devotees will notice the correlation between the “eight-times-of-the-day” concept and the *arati* ceremony, or Deity worship. This is meant to give the contemplative practitioner of *vaidhi-bhakti-sadhana* a foretaste for the desired goal of his practice: to enter into spontaneous service and love (*rag-anuga*). The eight periods in the daily life of the Deity may be compared and contrasted with *ashtakaliya-lila* meditation for deeper understanding of each *arati* ceremony.

(1) **Mangal arati.** The Deities of Shri Shri Radha and Krishna are awakened from their transcendental sleep, usually at about 4:00 A.M., and they are offered various items for their pleasure.

(2) **Sringar arati.** Krishna is fully and elaborately dressed for His day's activities, as is Shrimati Radharani. They are offered a morning snack as well.

(3) **Raj Bhoga arati.** The Deities are then offered a large midday meal and are prepared to take a short nap.

(4) **Utthapan arati.** They are awakened from their nap in order to continue their daily activities.

(5) **Sandhya arati.** During a specific twilight hour, the Deities return home—Krishna from grazing His cows and Radharani from Her activity—to rest from an active day.

(6) **Vyalu Bhoga arati.** At this time, the Deities are served their large evening meal.

(7) **Shayan arati.** The last offering takes place between 9:00 and 10:30 P.M., and devotees can see the Deities for the last time of the day before the altar doors close. At this time the Deities are dressed for bed and they retire for the evening.

(8) **Rasa-lila.** After the Deities take rest, they should not be disturbed, for at this time they sneak out to enjoy their transcendental *rasa* dance (only to return in the early morning hours just before *mangal arati*).

There are some variations on this theme—*aratiks* are sometimes called by different names, etc.—but in essence this is how the Lord and His associates spend their day. This is the inner secret of the Gaudiya *sampradaya*, and it can be experienced on the spiritual platform by strict adherence to the process of Krishna consciousness. That all conditioned and even liberated souls benefit from this experience is the internal desire (*mano-bhishtam*) of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

I have attempted here to briefly outline this esoteric revelation—the main contribution of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu—called *Manjari bhava* (in relation to *raganuga-bhakti-sadhana*), because many sincere devotees and scholars have asked me to do so. I have complied with their wishes for my own purification as well as for the benefit of all interested readers. It is an elaborate subject and due to propriety and time constraints I have chosen to cut short my analysis. It is a confidential aspect of the Absolute Truth, and even this much has only been revealed in the good faith that it will entice readers to study more closely the

profound subject of Gaudiya Vaishnavism—Krishna consciousness.

At least this much can be said: in the life and teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu we have an extraordinary revelation of the Absolute Truth, one that is full of color, vitality, and personal aesthetics. By contrast, in the West, God is often perceived as a colorless, somber personality—if a person at all!—and this has prompted contemporary philosophers to declare that “God is dead!”

Frederick Nietzsche, the well-known German philosopher who was initially bold enough to make this claim, would have sung a different song if he had known about Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. But, like many Western philosophers, Nietzsche's conception of God was beleaguered by Teutonic myths and negative theology. The God of the Bible was for them a vengeful and static God. Consequently, Nietzsche was once known to have facetiously exclaimed: “I should believe only in a God who understood how to dance.”¹⁰ Alas, he never knew of Mahaprabhu, the divine golden dancer, a God in whose eternal dance the highest aspects of divine love, culminating in *raganuga-bhakti-sadhana* and the bliss of a faithful *manjari*, are revealed. This, indeed, is the God for Whom everyone is searching.

Notes

1. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (trans.), 17 Volumes, *Chaitanya-charitamrita* (Los Angeles, Bhaktivedanta Booktrust, 1974), *Adi-lila* 1, ch. 4, texts 14-16, pp. 237-8.

2. See His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Conversations With Srila Prabhupada* (Los Angeles, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1990), Volume 21, pp. 1-17, and Volume 22, p. 95. Also see *Nectar of Devotion* (Los Angeles, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1982), p. 127.
3. *Chaitanya-charitamrita*, op. cit., *Adi-lila* 1, ch. 4, texts 17-19, pp. 238-40.
4. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Teachings of Lord Chaitanya* (Los Angeles, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, reprint, 1974), pp.331-2.
5. Ibid.
6. June McDaniel, *The Madness of the Saints: Ecstatic Religion in Bengal* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989), p.49.
7. David Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation : A Study of Raganuga Bhakti Sadhana* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.7 & 66.
8. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Krishna Book*, Three Volumes (Los Angeles, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, reprint, 1982), Vol. 1, p. 291.
9. A.W. Entwistle, *Braj: Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage* (Groningen, the Netherlands, Egbert Forsten, 1987), pp. 55-6.

10. Walter Kaufman (trans.), Frederick Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New York, Penguin Books, 1961), p. 68.

Steven Rosen (aka Satyaraj Das) is a free-lance writer and the author of several books, including *Food for the Spirit: Vegetarianism and the World Religion* (New York, Bala Books, 1987), *India's Spiritual Renaissance: The Life and Times of Lord Chaitanya* (New York, FOLK Books, 1988), and *Archeology and the Vaishnava Tradition: The Pre-Christian Roots of Krishna Worship* (Calcutta, India, Firma KLM Ltd., 1989). He is an initiated disciple of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder and spiritual master of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Although Satyaraja Dasa was not born in India, his writing and scholarship has developed for him a reputation as an important voice in the Indian religious community. As an American Vaishnava, he serves as the Minister of Interreligious Affairs for the New York chapter of ISKCON.

F O L K B O O K S

Folk art is, indeed, the oldest of the aristocracies of thought, and because it refuses what is passing and trivial, the merely clever and pretty, as certainly as the vulgar and insincere, and because it has gathered into itself the simplest and most unforgettable thoughts of the generations, it is the soil where all great art is rooted. Wherever it is spoken by the fireside, or sung by the roadside, or carved upon the lintel, appreciation of the arts that a single mind gives unity and design to, spreads quickly when its hour is come.

—*W.B. Yeats*

Steven Rosen's work admirably combines personal commitment with research into original sources. The Six Goswamis were crucial to the theological development of Chaitanya's devotional movement, and this series of biographical sketches makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the backgrounds they brought to this task.

Richard Davis,
Professor of Religious Studies,
Yale University

By presenting a handy conspectus of accounts relating to the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan, this book will help English-speaking readers understand what these men are held to have achieved and why they have been so venerated. It is the latest entry in a tradition of Indian hagiography that is centuries old, and notable for being composed by an American living in New York.

John Stratton Hawley,
Professor of Religion,
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