

## **Is Srila Prabhupada In The Highest Rasa?**

By Jadurani dasi

This presentation is a response to the recent VNN article of Pujoyapada Tripurari Maharaja, in which he shared his idea that Srila Prabhupada is in sakhya-rasa as a priya-narma sakha, an intimate cowherd-boy friend of Krsna. The evidence quoted herein shows that Srila Prabhupada, following in the footsteps of our previous rupanuga acaryas, is not a cowherd-boy. He is actually in madhurya rasa. He has instructed us by his own activities in a very specific way, one which is entirely consonant with the precepts of madhurya-rasa given in our line. A careful study of his writings and recorded instructions, as well as the writings of other acaryas, makes this very clear.

Although the subject matter of this article should normally not be discussed in a public forum, we were requested to do so by senior devotees, so that Srila Prabhupada's position would not be misunderstood. If his position is misunderstood, then so also is his mission. Sripad Tripurari Maharaja's article states that it is "reasonable to conjecture" about the relationship of the spiritual master and Krsna. Yet sastra emphatically states, "tarko pratisthat srutayo vibhina: It is improper to conjecture or apply logic and reason to transcendental subject matter. Rather, one should simply receive perfect knowledge descending from a realized authority.". Additionally, our ideas must be clearly supported by sastric evidence; and this process is established in the writings of our acaryas. In his Dasa-mula siksa, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura gives the definition of amnaya, evidence, as follows: "The message of the Vedas received through guru-parampara is called amnaya. The Vedas and smrti-sastra (such as Srimad-Bhagavatam) which follow the Vedic version have been accepted as authoritative proof, as have different types of evidence such as direct perception, inasmuch as they confirm the Vedic version.."

For many years, I also used to tell devotees that Srila Prabhupada is a sakha. I was confused about his identity before I met Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja. He brought light on Prabhupada's glory.

### **Access to Radha-Krsna Lila**

Srila Prabhupada has broadcast the pastimes of Sri Sri Radha and Krsna in Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, Krsna Book, Nectar of Devotion and Nectar of Instruction. If he were a cowherd boy, even the most intimate cowherd boy known as the priya-narma sakha, he would not have had full access to the understanding of Radha-Krsna lila, nor would he have been able to give his followers the complete understanding. Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami confirms this:

radha-krsnera lila ei ati gudhathara  
dasya-vatsalyadi-bhave na haya gocara

sabe eka sakhi-ganera ihan adhikara  
sakhi haite haya ei lilara vistara

sakhi vina ei lila pusta nahi haya

sakhi lila vistariya, sakhi asvadaya

“The pastimes of Radha and Krsna are very confidential. They cannot be understood through the mellows of servitude (dasya rasa), fraternity (sakhya rasa) or paternal affection (vatsalya rasa). Actually, only the gopis have the right to appreciate these transcendental pastimes, and only from them can these pastimes be expanded. Without the gopis, these pastimes between Radha and Krsna cannot be nourished. Only by their cooperation are such pastimes broadcast. It is their business to taste the mellows.” (C.c. Madhya 8.201-3)

### Following in the Footsteps of the Assistant Maidservants

Srila Prabhupada offered to take his followers back to Godhead, to serve the divine lila of Radha and Krsna. He therefore gave songs to help them attain that service. In 1970 he gave them the Tulasi arati song, beginning “namo namo tulasi krsna preyasi.” In this song devotees pray: “My desire is that you will also grant me a residence within the pleasure groves of Vrndavana. Thus within my vision I will always behold the beautiful pastimes of Sri Sri Radha and Krsna. I beg you to make me a follower of the cowherd damsels of Vraja. Please give me the privilege of devotional service and make me your own maidservant.”

In 1966, Srila Prabhupada gave his disciples the Sri Gurvastakam prayers by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, and they have been singing these prayers to him since that time. Verse six, beginning “nikunja yuno rati keli siddhyai”, describes the spiritual master as “very dear, because he is expert at assisting the gopis in making tasteful arrangements for the perfection of Sri Sri Radha Krsna's conjugal loving affairs within the groves (kunjas) of Vrndavan.” Every morning before his Srimad Bhagavatam class he used to sing, “jaya radha-madhava kunjabihari, jaya gopi jana vallabha giri-varadhari: Krsna is the lover of Radha. He displays many amorous pastimes in the groves of Vrndavana. He is the lover of the gopis, the lifter of Govardhana”. Pujyapada Tripurari Maharaja has given a poem about Subala-sakha serving in the forest bowers (kunjas), though he did not give a sastric reference for that poem. A cowherd boy would not sing this song. In the Caitanya-caritamrta it is said that only by following in the footsteps of the gopis can one serve in the kunjas of Vraja (radha-krsna-kunjaseva). Both Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Sri Raya Ramananda have clearly told this:

sakhi vina ei lilaya anyera nahi gati  
sakhi-bhave ye tanre kare anugati

radha-krsna-kunjaseva-sadhya sei paya  
sei sadhya paite ara nahika upaya

“Without the help of the gopis, one cannot enter into these pastimes. Only he who worships the Lord in the ecstasy of the gopis, following in their footsteps, can engage in the service of Sri Sri Radha-Krsna in the bushes (kunjas) of Vrndavana. Only then can one understand the conjugal love between Radha and Krsna. There is no other procedure for understanding.”

### Purport

“The means for returning home, for going back to Godhead, is devotional service, but everyone has a different taste in the Lord’s service. One may be inclined to serve the Lord in servitude (dasya-rasa), fraternity (sakhya-rasa), or paternal love (vatsalya-rasa), but none of these can enable one to enter into the service of the Lord in conjugal love. To attain such service, one has to follow in the footsteps of the gopis in the ecstasy of sakhi-bhava. Then only can one understand the transcendental mellow of conjugal love.” (C.c. Madhya 8.204-5)

One may achieve the highest perfection of devotional service—residence at Sri Radha-kunda in Goloka Vrndavana—by taking shelter of the assistant gopis or manjaris:

“Living entities who are eager to return home to the transcendental kingdom of God, Goloka Vrndavana, by means of attaining their spiritual bodies (siddha-deha) should live at Radha-kunda, take shelter of the confidential serving maids of Sri Radha, and under their direction engage constantly in Her service...One should bathe there at Radha-Kunda regularly and give up all material conceptions, taking shelter of Sri Radha and Her assistant gopis. If one is thus constantly engaged during his lifetime, after giving up the body he will return back to Godhead to serve Sri Radha in the same way as he contemplated during his life on the banks of Radha-Kunda. The conclusion is that to live on the banks of the Radha-Kunda and to bathe there daily constitute the highest perfection of devotional service.”  
(Nectar of Instruction verse 11 purport)

### Krsna’s Dance Party

The process brought to the western world by Srila Prabhupada enables his followers to enter into and serve in Krsna's rasa-lila dance. Only the gopis join in this pastime. This and the following quotes reveal his ultimate purpose:

“This is spontaneous; this is life. And that is our real life in the spiritual world...The Vedanta says that God is anandamaya, full of bliss and pleasure. We are part and parcel of God; we are also of the same quality. Anandamayo ’bhyasat. So our whole process is to join the supreme anandamaya, Krsna, in His dance party. That will make us actually happy.” (Lecture Los Angeles Feb 13 1969)

The Iskcon Vaisnava acaryas’ songbook includes Srila Prabhupada’s recorded purport to Nitai-pada-kamalam’:

“Unless you take shelter under the shade of the lotus feet of Nityananda...“radha-krsna paite nai”...it will be very difficult to approach Radha-Krsna. This Krsna consciousness movement is for approaching Radha-Krsna, to be associated with the Supreme Lord in His sublime pleasure dance. That is the aim of Krsna consciousness. So Narottama dasa Thakura’s advice is, “If you actually want to enter into the dancing party of Radha-Krsna, then you must take shelter of the lotus feet of Nityananda.”

Srila Prabhupada would not promise his followers that he could give them a relationship with Krsna which he himself does not have and is thus not able to give. “Unless one practises devotional service himself, he cannot teach it to others. This conclusion is indeed confirmed throughout the Gita and Bhagavatam.” (C.c. Adi 3.21)

### **Rupanuga-Bhakti and Manjari Bhava**

Srila Prabhupada is strictly a follower in the line of Srila Rupa Gosvami. In the beginning of his preface to the Nectar of Instruction, he writes:

“The Krsna consciousness movement is conducted under the supervision of Srila Rupa Gosvami. The Gaudiya Vaisnavas, or Bengali Vaisnavas, are mostly followers of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, of whom the six Gosvamis of Vrndavana are direct disciples. Therefore Srila Narottama dasa Thakura has sung “rupa-raghunathapade haibe akuti kabe hama bujhaba se yugala-piriti”...“When I am eager to understand the literature given by the Gosvamis, then I shall be able to understand the transcendental loving affairs of Radha and Krsna.” Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in order to bestow upon human society the benediction of the science of Krsna. The most exalted of all the activities of Lord Krsna are His pastimes of conjugal love with the gopis. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in the mood of Srimati Radharani, the best of the gopis. Therefore, to understand the mission of Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and follow in His footsteps, one must very seriously follow in the footsteps of the six Gosvamis—Sri Rupa, Sanatana, Bhatta Raghunatha, Sri Jiva, Gopala Bhatta and Dasa Raghunatha.”

In the preface to Nectar of Devotion, Srila Prabhupada writes: “The present Krsna consciousness movement is also based on the authority of Srila Rupa Gosvami Prabhupada. We are therefore generally known as Rupanugas, or followers in the footsteps of Srila Rupa Gosvami Prabhupada.” This is also presented in the pranama mantras to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada: “madhuryojjvala-premadhya-sri-rupanuga bhaktida, sri-gaura-karuna-sakti-vigrahaya namo ’stu te. Again and again I offer obeisances unto Srila Sarasvati Thakura who is the mercy incarnate of Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu, and who, as a follower of Sri Rupa manjari, is bestowing ujjvala-madhurya-rasa, brilliant conjugal prema”.

This unnatojvalla rasa, or madhuryojjvala-rasa, is the same gift that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu came to bestow. This is the gift of all acaryas who are strictly in the line of Srila Rupa Gosvami. This gift of Mahaprabhu was not given by any previous acarya or incarnation.

Mahaprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself, and He came to this world for two reasons: to taste the glory of Srimati Rādhārāṇī's love and to engage the jivas in Her divine service, (see *Adi* 4.15-16). The following verse, appearing in *Caitanya-caritamṛta* (*Adi* 1.4) was taken from *Vidagdha-madhava*, composed by *Srila Rupa Gosvami*.

anarpita-carim cirat karunayavatirnah kalau  
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasah sva-bhakti-sriyam

harih purata-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandipitah  
sada hrdaya-kandare sphuratu vah saci-nandanah

“May that Lord who is known as the son of Srimati Sacidevi be transcendently situated in the innermost chambers of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has appeared in the Age of Kali, by His causeless mercy, to bestow what no incarnation ever offered before: the most sublime and radiant spiritual knowledge of the mellow taste of His service.” (*C.c. Adi* 1.4)

The last part of this verse may also be translated as, “what no incarnation ever offered before—*manjari-bhava*, the service of Srimati Rādhikā as Her confidential maidservant.” *Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta* states: “By nature, Srimati Rādhārāṇī is just like a creeper of love of Godhead, and the *gopis* are the twigs, flowers and leaves of that creeper” (*Madhya* 8.210). Using the same analogy in his *Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta bhāṣya* (commentary), *Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura* has given the meaning of the phrase “*sva-bhakti-sriyam*”. This understanding is also explained below by *Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja*:

“Then what has He come to give? *Unnatojjvala-rasam sva-bhakti-sriyam*. In this connection there is more emphasis on the final words, *sva-bhakti-sriyam*. ‘*Sva*’ means own. Own *bhakti*. Whose own? Srimati Rādhikā’s own. Kṛṣṇa’s *bhakti* means Rādhikā’s *bhakti*, because Rādhikā is Herself the personification of Kṛṣṇa’s *bhakti*. *Sri* Kṛṣṇa wanted to taste the essence of supreme devotion to Himself, which is Rādhikā’s love, and He wanted to distribute to the qualified *jiva* His *bhakti sriyam*. ‘*Sva*’ means Rādhikā. ‘*Bhakti*’ means Rādhikā’s *bhakti*, and *Sri* means ‘*shoba*’, beauty. *Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu* wanted to give the beauty of Srimati Rādhikā’s *unnatojjvala-rasa*.

“The following example will help us to understand. Imagine a creeper. If that creeper has no leaves, no fruits and no flowers, then it has no beauty. There are so many very green leaves, and so many flowers here and there on each branch. There are also *manjaris*, and some very sweet and delicious reddish or golden mangos. Cuckoos always eat these mangos and sing very sweetly. If the air touches and plays with these creepers, all the leaves become happy and begin to dance. At this time the *manjaris* also dance in happiness. This is the beauty of that creeper. However, if the creeper has no leaves, no *manjaris*, and no fruits, the air will not play with that branch. It will have no taste to play. If we see a creeper playing with the air, its leaves going here and there, and always dancing, that is the beauty of that creeper. Similarly, *Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu* wanted to give the beauty of Srimati Rādhikā’s

unnatojjvala-rasa. The creeper represents Srimati Radhika Herself. And what is the beauty? Her sakhis.

“Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has come only for unnatojjvala-rasa. What is this unnatojjvala-rasa? It is the gopis’ mood of service to Krsna, and particularly it is the mood of Srimati Radhika. Do not think that the use of the word gopi is sahajiyism. If this were the case, then Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja (the author of Caitanya-caritamrta), Srila Rupa Gosvami (the author of this sloka), and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu (the emodiment of Caitanya-caritamrta) would all be sahajiyas; because this verse is the mangalacarana (invocation) and main verse of Caitanya-caritamrta. Unnatojjvala-rasa is of two kinds: the mood of Srimati Radhika and the gopis like Lalita, Visakha, Citra, etc., and also the mood of the palya-dasis, the maidservants of Srimati Radhika. The palya-dasis of Srimati Radhika do not want to serve Krsna if He is without Radhika. If Krsna, alone, is calling them, they will not go to Him; and they do not want to personally taste Him in any way. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has come to distribute the mood of these maidservants, like Rupa manjari and Lavanga manjari, in their service to Srimati Radhika and Krsna. Srimati Radhika’s mood cannot be given; it is Hers exclusively. As Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Krsna fully tasted her three moods. (C.c. Adi 1.6)

“The pleasure that Srimati Radhika experiences in serving and seeing Krsna cannot be given to anyone, but the mood of the maidservant gopis can be given. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has therefore come only to give this mood of service to Srimati Radhika, the mood of leaning more towards Her service than towards Krsna’s, but ultimately serving both. Prior to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu’s appearance, Sri Ramanujacarya, Sri Madhvacarya and so many Vaisnava acaryas had already appeared. Incarnations like Lord Rama and Lord Nrsimha had also descended. All of Them gave a very special contribution to the world, but none of them gave this prema, called bhakti-rasa, which Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu gave through Srila Rupa Gosvami.

“There were so many great devotees present as intimate associates of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu—like the six Gosvamis, Sri Svarupa Damodara and Sri Raya Ramananda, but this sloka (sri-caitanya-mano-’bhistam...), composed by Srila Narottama dasa Thakura, was especially written to glorify Srila Rupa Gosvami. Because he is Rupa-manjari, he can understand the Lord’s innermost desires, and give to the jivas his own intimate service to Krsna. Srila Svarupa Damodara and Srila Raya Ramananda were Lalita and Visakha, and neither of their moods nor their specific type of service can be given. They serve Krsna like Srimati Radhika serves Him, in the sense that Krsna enjoys rasa with them and they taste Him directly.

“Srila Svarupa Damodara and Srila Raya Ramananda were the siksa-gurus of Srila Rupa Gosvami. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu requested them, as well as Nityananda Prabhu and all His other associates, to give special mercy to Srila Rupa Gosvami, so that he could realize His heart’s inner desire, and distribute it to the entire world. They all gave their mercy, and Srila Rupa Gosvami was thus

empowered to compose literatures expressing Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's inner moods. In this way, Srila Rupa Gosvami pleased the Lord. No one before Him had composed books like his."

"Srila Bhaktivedanta Svami Maharaja has come to give these elevated principles through the Holy Name. For less qualified persons he also gave vaidhi-bhakti through the Name, but his innermost mood was to give this Krsna-prema...He was a Rupanuga Vaisnava, a follower of Rupa Gosvami, Rupa manjari."  
(Pinnacle of Devotion)

### **The Rupanuga Vaisnava Disciplic Succession**

Practically all of the bhajana songs that Srila Prabhupada personally sang are those of acaryas who have the siddha-deha of maidservants of Srimati Radharani. An example is "radha-krsna prana mora jugala-kisora", which describes the confidential service of the manjaris to the Divine Couple: "I will decorate black Krsna and golden Radharani with sandalpaste scented with cuwa. I will fan them with a camara and behold Their moonlike faces..." While singing the sad-gosvamy-astakam, Srila Prabhupada had such deep feelings that he would sometimes weep. As a follower of the six Gosvamis, both externally and internally, he was engaged in his preaching mission and at the same time he was internally absorbed as a gopi-maidservant. The verse beginning 'tyaktva turnam asesam mandala patim' reflects this truth:

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto the six Gosvamis, namely Sri Rupa Gosvami, Sri Sanatana Gosvami, Sri Raghunatha Bhatta Gosvami, Sri Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Sri Jiva Gosvami, and Sri Gopala Bhatta Gosvami, who kicked off all association of aristocracy as insignificant. In order to deliver the poor conditioned souls, they accepted loincloths, treating themselves as mendicants, but they were always merged in the ecstatic ocean of the gopis' love for Krsna, and they bathed always and repeatedly in the waves of that ocean."

Just before Srila Prabhupada departed from this world in November 1977, Paramapujyapada Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja visited him, accompanied by Pujapada Sesasayi brahmacari. At that time, Srila Prabhupada listened to Sripada Sesasayi as he sang Sri Rupa manjari-pada. In this song, Srila Narottama dasa Thakura glorifies the lotus feet of Sri Rupa manjari as his dearest treasure, his topmost object of worship, the object of his devotional practices, his wealth, the beautiful ornament of his life, and the very life of his life.

Our whole guru-parampara, from Srila Madhavendra Puripada up to now; Sri Svarupa Damodara, Sri Raya Ramananda, and Srila Rupa Goswami and all his followers—all are sakhis or manjaris. Sri Svarupa Damodara Gosvami and Sri Raya Ramananda are Lalita and Visakha respectively. The others, like Sri Rupa Goswami, Sri Raghunatha das Goswami and so on, are manjaris. If Srila Prabhupada were a cowherd boy, he would not at all be in the line of Srila Rupa Goswami. Those who perform sadhana to become sakhis are not in the line of Rupa Goswami. They are Raganuga Vaisnavas, but not Rupanuga. Raganuga bhakti refers to all the mellow

relationships with Kṛṣṇa, like friendship, parental love, and conjugal love. (See C.c. 8, 153-157). Svarupa Damodara and Ramanada Raya are also not Rupanuga bhaktas. They are also not in the line following Rupa Goswami. They are the gurus of Srila Rupa Goswami. In our line— from Rupa Goswami— our entire parampara consists of Rupanuga Vaisnavas. Surely Prabhupada cannot be a sakha.

Sri Gaura Ganoddesa Dipika by Srila Kavi-karnapura, much of which is quoted in Prabhupada's purports of *Adi lila*, ch 9-10, gives so much information about who Lord Caitanya's associates are in Kṛṣṇa-lila. For example, Srila Rupa Goswami is Sri Rupa manjari. Srila Raghunatha dasa Goswami is Rati manjari, Srila Jiva Goswami is Vilasa manjari, Srila Raghunatha Bhatta Goswami is Rasa Manjari, and Srila Sanatana Goswami is Lavanga manjari. In the Goswami literature it is revealed that Narottama dasa Thakura is Anuvilasa manjari. In his *Navadvipa Bhava Taranga*, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura recognizes himself as Kamala manjari.

We do not know of a single instance where an acarya in our Rupanuga line has a different svarupa and service from that of his guru, in whose footsteps he follows. Sadhakas of sakhya-rasa do not follow in the footsteps of Rupa Goswami or Rupa manjari. They follow in the footsteps of Subala who, according to the *Gaura-ganoddesa-dipika*, is Gauridasa Pandita in Caitanya-lila. Gauridasa Pandita is a raganuga acarya in our Gaudiya Vaisnava sampradaya, but he is not in the line of Srila Rupa Goswami.

Again, Srila Prabhupada directs us to follow in the footsteps of the gopis:

“To acquire this strong feeling of separation is the teaching of Lord Caitanya and His direct disciplic succession of Gosvamis. When we are not in physical contact with Kṛṣṇa, we can associate with Him like the gopis, through feelings of separation. Kṛṣṇa's transcendental form, qualities, pastimes and entourage are all identical with Him.

“There are nine different kinds of devotional service. Devotional service to Kṛṣṇa in feelings of separation elevates the devotee to the highest perfectional level, to the level of the gopis. It is stated in Srinivasacarya's prayer to the six Gosvamis that they left the material opulences of government service and the princely status of life and went to Vrndavana, where they lived just like ordinary mendicants, begging from door to door. But they were so much enriched with the gopis' feelings of separation that they enjoyed transcendental pleasure at every moment. Similarly, when Lord Caitanya was at Jagannatha Puri, He was in the role of Radharani, feeling separation from Kṛṣṇa. Those who are in the disciplic succession of the Madhva-Gaudiya-sampradaya should always feel separation from Kṛṣṇa, worship His transcendental form and discuss His transcendental teachings, His pastimes, His qualities and His entourage. That will enrich the devotees to the highest devotional perfection. Feeling constant separation while engaged in the service of the Lord is the perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” (Kṛṣṇa Book Ch. 35)

Our Srila Prabhupada received diksa initiation from his Prabhupada, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta

Sarasvati Thakura. Among the diksa mantras is the gopala mantra, which contains the words ‘gopi-jana-vallabhaya-svaha.’ This means, “I have accepted the same relation with Krsna that is accepted by all the gopis, ie: “Krsna is my beloved.” Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura has explained that this mantra is a gopi mantra, a mantra for developing the mood of the gopis. It is for ‘gopi bhava asraya’, taking shelter of their transcendental loving sentiments. The kama-gayatri is also only for becoming a gopi. It is not for any other mood.

In 1966 Srila Prabhupada introduced his Guru Maharaja’s pranama mantras, and Iskcon devotees have been chanting them since that time. These mantras describe Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura’s merciful distribution of rupanuga-bhakti and his intolerance of those misconceptions which are opposed to the precepts enunciated by Srila Rupa Gosvami. Srila Sarasvati Thakura also revealed his svarupa as Nayana manjari to several of his most intimate disciples. In Gaudiya Patrika he also revealed the identity of Srila Gaura-kisora das Babaji as Guna manjari. In a letter to Hamsaduta (Jan 16, 1969), Srila Prabhupada answered a question regarding the svarupa of his Guru Maharaja: “My Guru Maharaja’s position was one of the assistants of the manjaris”.

In 1959 Srila Prabhupada took sannyasa from his revered god-brother Srila Bhaktiprajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, who is Vinoda manjari in Krsna-lila. The sannyasa mantra Srila Prabhupada received is the mantra of all sannyasis in the line of Srila Rupa Gosvami. It is a gopi-mantra, a prayer for becoming a gopi.

### **The Role of the Priya-Narma Sakhas**

The confidential role of the priya-narma sakhas is described in the Nectar of Devotion as follows:

“There are other friends who are still more confidential. They are called priya-narma, or intimate friends. Counted among the priya-narma friends are Subala, Arjuna, Gandharva, Vasanta and Ujjvala. There was talk among the friends of Radharani, the gopis, about these most intimate friends. One gopi addressed Radharani thus: “My dear Krsangi [delicate one], just see how Subala is whispering Your message into Krsna’s ear, how he is delivering the confidential letter of Syama-dasi silently into Krsna’s hand, how he is delivering the betel nuts prepared by Palika into Krsna’s mouth, and how he is decorating Krsna with the garland prepared by Taraka. Did you know, my dear friend, that all these most intimate friends of Krsna are always engaged in His service in this way?” (Ch. 41)

This quote is additional evidence that Prabhupada is not a priya-narma sakha. As a rupanuga devotee, Srila Prabhupada, in his siddha-sarira as a maidservant of Radhika, would only serve Krsna in relation to Her, not in relation to other groups of gopis. In Bhaktirasamrta Sindhu Bindu, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura writes that Syama dasi is a suhrt-paksa gopi. This means she is on friendly terms with Srimati Radharani and Her group (headed by Lalita and Visakha and Rupa Manjari), but she is not actually in that intimate group herself. Palika is tatastha-paksa. This means she is neutral towards Srimati Radhika’s group and friendly towards

Candravali's group. (Candravali is Srimati Radharani's rival.) Taraka is vipaksa. This means she is opposed to Radhika, as is Srimati Candravali. The following is the actual verse by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura:

akhila-rasamrta-murtih prasmara  
 rucir-uddha-taraka-palih  
 kalita-syama-lalito  
 radha-preyan vidhur jayati

“Let there be all glory to omnipotent Lord Sri Krsna Candra who is endowed with all excellence and who is the personification of transcendental bliss characterized by the twelve forms of rasa—five primary (mukhya rasa—santa, dasya, sakhya, vatsalya, and madhura) and seven secondary (gauna rasa—laughter, wonder, compassion, anger, fear, heroism, and disgust). By the radiance of His limbs which is spreading in all directions, He has brought under His control the yuthesvaris or leaders of the various groups of gopis, named Taraka (vipaksa—representing a rival group to that of Sri Radha) and Pali (tatastha paksa—representing a neutral group). He has made Syamala (suharta paksa—representing a friendly group) and Lalita (svapaksa—belonging to Radhika's own group) His very own, and He is the most beloved of Srimati Radhika (Radha-preyan). That is, being under the control of the prema of Srimati Radhika, who is the embodiment of the mahabhava of all the yuthesvaris, He is always intently absorbed in inspiring Her love.”

A maidservant (manjari) of Srimati Radhika, being svapaksa, within Her very intimate group, would never give Krsna a garland made by Taraka, who is opposed to Her, as Subala is described as doing in the abovementioned verse of Nectar of Devotion.

A devotee once gave a leafcup filled with buttermilk to Srila Raghunatha dasa Goswami. In his siddha-sarira, Raghunatha dasa Goswami is Rati Manjari, one of the leaders of Srimati Radhika's maidservants. When he heard that the leafcup had come from sakhi-sthali, the abode of Candravali, he immediately threw it away. Being completely loyal to his Swamini, Srimati Radhika, he even wanted to beat that devotee with a stick.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura who, in his siddha-sarira serves Srimati Radhika as Kamala Manjari, writes in his book Saranagati, in the fourth song of Bhakti-Pratikula-Bhava Varjanangikara (Renunciation of Conduct Unfavorable to Pure Devotion):

ami to' swananda-sukhada-basi  
 radhika-madhava-carana-dasi

dunhara milane ananda kori  
 dunhara viyoge duhkete mari

sakhi-sthali nahi heri nayane  
 dekhile saibyake paraye mane

je-je pratikula candrara sakhi

prane dukkha pai tahare dekhi'

radhika-kunja andhara kori'  
loite cahe se radhara hari

sri-radha-govinda- milana-sukha  
pratikula-jana na heri mukha

radha-pratikula jateka jana-  
sambhasane kabhu na hoy mana

bhaktivinoda sri-radha-carane  
sanpeche parana ativa jatane

### Translation

- 1) Oh, I am resident of Svananda-sukhada-kunja, and a maidservant of the lotus feet of Radhika and Madhava.
- 2) I happily rejoice at the union of the Divine Couple, and in Their separation I die in utter anguish.
- 3) I never look at the area in Vraja called Sakhi-stahli where Candravali and her friends live. If I were to see that place it reminds me of Candravali's sharp-tongued gopi named Saibya.
- 4) I feel pain in my heart whenever I happen to catch sight of Candravali's proud girlfriends, for they are all inimical to Radha's camp.
- 5) Candravali wants to take away Radha's Lord Hari, thus causing the love-grove of Radhika to be overcast with the darkness of gloom.
- 6) I never look at the faces of those who wish to obstruct the joy of the union of Sri Radha and Govinda.
- 7) Nor do I find any pleasure in conversing with those who are members of a camp opposed to Radha.
- 8) Bhaktivinoda has entrusted his soul with great care unto the lotus feet of Srimati Radharani.

Although there is a certain intermingling of madhurya rasa in the service of the priya-narma sakhas, they follow in the footsteps of associates like Subala, not the gopis. The priya-narma sakhas serve in the lila of Radha-Krsna in their own way, and the seva which they perform is clearly distinct from that of the manjaris. The manjaris' seva, also described in the song "Radha-Krsna prana mora" by Srila Narottama dasa Thakura, is the service upon which all the acaryas in our line

have meditated and instructed their disciples. This service is specific to the manjaris, who have special access to the lilas of Radha-Krsna. The priya-narma sakhas can touch mahabhava, but not more than that. In Jaivadharmā and Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu it is written that they can take shelter of some small aspect of sakhi bhava. They cannot be like Rupa manjari, who can even taste Srimati Radhika's madanakya maha-bhava (the highest development of Mahabhava, which is not even found in Lalita and Visaka). They cannot serve Krsna and Radha while they are playing in the kunjās. They can never go there. Subala may sometimes bring Krsna to a kunjā, but he can never go inside and serve. The gopis, on the other hand, can enter the kunjā, and they can also dress and decorate Radha and Krsna there. In his Vraja Vilasa Stava, Text 31, Srila Raghunatha dasa Goswami writes:

tambularpana-pana-mardana-payo-danabhisaradibhir  
vrndaranya-mahesvarim priyataya yas tosayanti priyah  
prana-prestha-sakhi-kulad api kilasankocita bhumikah  
keli-bhumisu rupa-manjari-mukhas ta dasika samsraye

“I take shelter of Sri Rupa Manjari and the other very dear maidservants of the great queen of Vrndavana, Srimati Radhika, who please Her by offering Her betel, massaging Her feet, offering Her water, and arranging for Her rendezvous with Krsna. Because these maidservants can enter the area where the Divine Couple enjoy Their most confidential pastimes without feeling shy, they are even more dear to Radhika than sakhis such as Lalita, who themselves are more dear to Her than life itself. In other words, the manjaris, headed by Sri Rupa manjari, can freely enter those kunjās where even the prana-prestha sakhis hesitate to enter.”

Furthermore, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's Jaivadharmā describes a conversation between Srila Gopala-guru Goswami and his disciple Sri Vijaya Kumara. Gopal-guru Goswami told his disciple that he should come and speak with him privately, not with Brajanatha, because Brajanatha was a follower of Subal, and therefore had no adhikara (qualification) to listen to his madhurya-katha.

Srila Prabhupada wrote a poem on his arrival to America in 1966 wherein he states his desire to frolic in Vrindavana, and therefore some think that he is a sakha: “O dear friend, in Your company I will experience great joy once again. In the early morning I will wander about the cowherd pastures and fields. Running and frolicking in the many forests of Vraja, I will roll on the ground in spiritual ecstasy. Oh, when will that day be mine?”

Actually, this is also part of the speciality of Srila Prabhupada's unnatojjvala-rasa, his constitutional position as a gopi. Srimati Radhika can also do this. Sometimes She serves Krsna like a mother, because the mood of mother is also there in Her, as stated in Sri Caitanya Caritamṛta, Madhya 8.83-87. Sometimes Radhika also serves like a sakha, and in many of our Goswami literatures there are descriptions of this. Sometimes She wrestles with Krsna, jokes, plays dice and other games, and engages in watersports with Him. In consequence, the divine existence of Prabhupada's poem is not an indication of a position as a cowherd boy.

Devotees who are eternally established in sakhya-rasa as priya-narma sakhas, as well as those sadhakas performing sadhana-bhajana to become priya-narma sakhas do not follow in the footsteps of the gopis. They follow in the footsteps of Subala. This is explained in the Nectar of Devotion: “Devotees who are attracted to Krsna as parents or as friends should follow in the footsteps of Nanda Maharaja or Subala, respectively. Nanda Maharaja is the foster father of Krsna, and out of all the friends of Krsna, Subala is the most intimate in Vrajabhumi.”

(Nectar of Devotion p 129)

### **Empowerment by Sri Nityananda**

Pujyapada Tripurari Maharaja writes: “Thus it is reasonable to conjecture that Om Visnupada A.C. Bhaktivedanta Srila Prabhupada, who established the worship of Radha Krsna, Gaura Nitai, and Krsna Balarama so widely, was himself influenced by the bhava of a priya narma sakha, either directly or indirectly, owing to the influence of his empowerment by Nityananda Prabhu. In the case of the latter possibility, his affinity for madhurya would have been veiled to some extent.”

This idea may have come from the following information in a purport to Sri Caitanya Caritamrta:

“One should always think of the spiritual master in terms of his intimate relationship with Mukunda (Sri Krsna)...following in the footsteps of Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami and Srila Jiva Gosvami...In all the ancient scriptures of devotional service and in the more recent songs of Srila Narottama dasa Thakura, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura and other unalloyed Vaisnavas, the spiritual master is always considered either one of the confidential associates of Srimati Radharani or a manifested representation of Srila Nityananda Prabhu.” (C.c. Adi 1.46)

But these two viewpoints are not mutually exclusive. ‘Either one or the other’ is understood in terms of two different viewpoints, not two types of spiritual masters. Nityananda Prabhu, being non-different from Lord Balarama, the original spiritual master, is akhanda guru-tattva, the embodiment of the complete principle of guru-tattva. As such, the gurus in the line of Rupa Gosvami are His direct manifestations and are empowered by Him. Yet, they are also maidservants of Srimati Radharani. In many of their songs they pray for the mercy of Nityananda Prabhu (Nitai Pada Kamala; Parama Karuna; Gauranga Bolite Habe etc.). At the end of every chapter of his book, Navadvipa Dhama Mahatmya, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura expresses his relationship with Lord Nityananda. At the end of chapter nine he writes: “Bhaktivinoda, within whom the ever-worshipable Jahnava and Nitai have appeared, sings the glory of Nadia and the sweetness of the devotees, while tasting transcendental flavors.” As quoted previously from Prabhupada’s commentary on ‘nitai pada kamala’, “If you actually want to enter into the dancing party of Radha-Krsna, then you must take shelter of the lotus feet of Nityananda”. Nityananda prabhu is thus indicated as the embodiment of the complete principle of guru-tattva, who enables us to approach Sri Sri Radha Krsna, through the grace of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Therefore, according to the

acaryas, “the spiritual master is always considered either one of the confidential associates of Srimati Radharani or a manifested representation of Srila Nityananda Prabhu.”

Considering all of this, it is clear that the word “or” in the C.c. Adi 1.46 purport cannot be construed to simply mean ‘one or the other’. Certainly it means that the identity of the spiritual master is to be understood both in terms of the principle of guru tattva, as well as in terms of the guru’s manjari-svarupa within the lila of Goloka Vrndavana.

There is another interesting point. Nityananda Prabhu has two forms in krsna-lila. One is Ananga manjari and the other is Sri Baladeva Prabhu. Therefore, some of His associates in Goloka Vrndavana are associates of Ananga Manjari as manjaris, and others are associates of Baladeva. In his Gita Mala, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura speaks of himself as a follower of Ananga manjari.

### **Installation of Krsna-Balarama and Gaura-Nitai Deities**

In his May 3<sup>rd</sup> article, Pujyapada Tripurari Maharaja writes: “My Guru Maharaja did not institute the worship of Gaura-Gadadhara in any of his temples. Sridhara Maharaja reasoned that this policy was based on his affinity for sakhya rasa rather than madhurya rasa. Thus he established the worship of Gaura-Nityananda and Krsna-Balarama. Worship of Radha-Krsna is also part of the sakhya rasa of the priya narma sakhas, headed by Subala. Thus it is reasonable to conjecture that Srila Prabhupada, who established the worship of Radha-Krsna, Gaura-Nitai, and Krsna-Balarama so widely, was himself influenced by the bhava of a priya narma sakha, either directly or indirectly, owing to the influence of his empowerment by Nityananda Prabhu. In the case of the latter possibility, his affinity for madhurya would have been veiled to some extent.”

Tripurari Maharaja indicates that because Srila Prabhupada was a sakha, he established Krsna-Balarama deities in Vrndavana, but Srila Prabhupada himself explained it in a different way. The introduction of Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai was made especially for the benefit of the most fallen souls. In this way they might become eligible to worship Sri Sri Radha-Krsna. In a Caitanya-caritamrta purport, Prabhupada explains:

“Since there is no prominent Krsna-Balarama temple in Vrndavana, we are attempting to construct one so that people will be attracted to Krsna-Balarama, or Nitai-Gauracandra. “Vrajendra-nandana yei, saci suta haila sei”. Narottama dasa Thakura says that Balarama and the son of Maharaja Nanda have advented Themselves as Gaura-Nitai. To propagate this fundamental principle, we are establishing a Krsna-Balarama temple to broadcast to the world that worship of Gaura-Nitai is the same as worship of Krsna-Balarama. Although it is very difficult to enter into the Radha-Krsna pastimes, most of the devotees of Vrndavana are attracted to the Radha-Krsna lila. However, since Nitai-Gauracandra are direct incarnations of Balarama and Krsna, we can be directly in touch with Lord Balarama and Lord Krsna through Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu. Those who are highly elevated in Krsna consciousness can enter into the pastimes of Radha-Krsna through the mercy of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.” (C.c. Madhya 6.281)

Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja was specifically instructed by Srila Prabhupada to establish Krsna-Balarama Deities in Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Prabhupada gave him detailed instructions on how this should be carried out. Below is an excerpt from *The Flow of Nectar*, where Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja explains something of the significance of this worship.

“Balarama is white, and there is a reason for it. You see, Balarama is Nityananda prabhu, Nityananda Rama...“nitai-pada-kamala, koti-candra-susitala”. His lotus feet are as cool as the cooling effect of crores of moons. So, what is the color of moonlight? That is white. So much mercy. Therefore Balarama has a plow in his hand, and Krsna a flute. That is Krsna-Balarama, plow and flute. So first cultivation—karsana is needed. Then all nasty weedlike things will be rooted out. The field should be cultivated properly with the plow of Balarama, then the field of the heart, hrdaya-ksetra—becomes fertile, and the seed of the devotional creeper, bhakti-lata, will be sown. That should not be a barren land. If you sow the seed in a barren land, the seed will never fructify. That is what Gopinathacarya said to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, “Why am I sowing seeds in a barren land? I am doing useless labor, because it will never fructify.” So, after proper cultivation by Balarama’s plow, when the land is fertile, the seed should be sown. Then, when you develop prema-bhakti you will be attracted by Krsna’s flute. The flute means akarsana, attraction. Karsana-akarsana, cultivation and enchantment. So, this is the Krsna-Balarama Mandir.”

Srila Prabhupada explained his reasons for establishing Gaura-Nitai deities in Atlanta, Georgia. Below is an excerpt from his arrival address there:

“Caitanya Mahaprabhu is very kind. Parama karuna, pahu dui jana. Two Lords, Nitai-Gauracandra, Nityananda Prabhu and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, They are very kind. You see? They have appeared just to reclaim the fallen souls of this age.” (Feb. 28 1975)

In Bhubaneswar, he explained the same point:

Srila Prabhupada: ‘No. When they have actually advanced and been initiated and are following strictly the Vaisnava principles, then Radha-Krsna. And Gaura-Nitai they can worship in any condition... At least if they see and chant Hare Krsna that will make them advance. Chanting of Hare Krsna maha-mantra before Gaura-Nitai will make them very quickly advanced in spiritual consciousness. Very quickly. There is no offense. He does not take any offenses. Whatever little service they do, it is accepted by Gaura-Nitai.’ (Conversation Feb 2 1977)

The worship of Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai is especially suitable for those who are fallen and lack the qualification to perform devotional service. There is no consideration of offences in Their worship. In “*The Golden Volcano*” Srila Sridhara Maharaja describes Nityananda’s mercy as “very lavish and almost blind” because “He does not discriminate between different degrees of sinners.

His mercy is all-embracing. And Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu cannot dismiss His recommendation. Even those who Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu rejected, Nityananda Prabhu sheltered and gradually Mahaprabhu had to accept them.” For this reason Srila Prabhupada recommended the worship of Gaura-Nitai throughout the world. There is no reason to take it as symptomatic of a predilection to sakhya-bhava. Moreover, he planted the seed for the worship of Gaura-Gadadhara:

Sangopangastra-parsadam. This is the description of God, Krsna, in this age. That is Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Krsna-varnah tvisakrsnah sangopangastra-parsadam. And how to worship Him? What is the process? Yajnah sankirtanaih. That’s all. You keep Caitanya Mahaprabhu’s Deity and chant and dance—your life is successful. So easy. We are worshipping Radha-Krsna. That is very difficult. But if we keep Caitanya Mahaprabhu with His associates, this Panca-tattva, Gaura-Nitai, Gaura-Gadadhara, or Panca-tattva, and worship Him according to the sastric description... The sastric description is yajnah sankirtanaih.”

(Lectures Bg. 7.2 March 10 1972 London)

### **Srila Prabhupada Has the Highest Relationship**

Some think that all rasas or relationships with Krsna are equal, and therefore it does not matter whether Srila Prabhupada is in one rasa or another. But this is not the case:

“It is true that whatever relationship a particular devotee has with the Lord is the best for him; still, when we study all the different methods from a neutral position, we can understand that there are higher and lower degrees of love. Increasing love is experienced in various tastes, one above another. But that love which has the highest taste in the gradual succession of desires manifests itself in the form of conjugal love. There is a gradual order of improvement in transcendental mellows from the initial ones to the later ones. In each subsequent mellow the qualities of the previous mellows are manifest, counting from two, then three, and up to the point of five complete qualities. As the qualities increase, so the taste also increases in each and every mellow. Therefore the qualities found in santa-rasa, dasya-rasa, sakhya-rasa and vatsalya-rasa are all manifest in conjugal love [madhurya-rasa]. The qualities in the material elements—sky, air, fire, water and earth—increase one after another by a gradual process of one, two and three, and at the last stage, in the element earth, all five qualities are completely visible.”

(C.c. Madhya. 8.83-87)

It is this madhurya rasa that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu especially came to give, through a development—beginning from vaidhi bhakti performed in the association of pure devotees, leading to raganuga bhakti, and then on to ragatmika bhakti, the fully-blossomed love of the residents of Vrndavan. Srila Prabhupada established temples, schools and farms, and the beginnings of varnashrama. He also published many books in several languages, and he travelled several times around the world to give his personal association. Development of this type of ragatmika bhakti in the conditioned souls was his ultimate goal throughout all these activities.

The conclusion then, is that Srila Prabhupada is one of the intimate palya-dasis, assistant maidservants, of Srimati Radharani, and the mercy-potency of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. We have no intention to minimize anyone. Our only intention is to defend the true glory of our guru-parampara.