

# THE GRAMMAR AND POETICS OF MŪRTI-SEVĀ

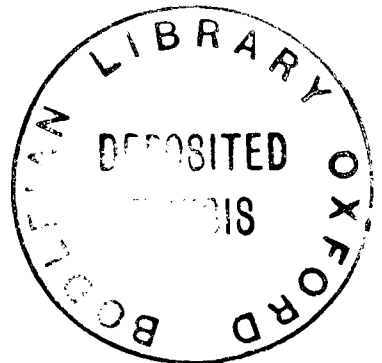
Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Image Worship  
as Discourse, Ritual, and Narrative

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## ABSTRACT

### *The Grammar and Poetics of Mūrti-sevā: Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Image Worship as Discourse, Ritual, and Narrative*

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This thesis offers a multi-faceted exploration of image worship theology and practice within a Vaishnava Hindu theistic devotional tradition founded in the sixteenth century, flourishing today largely in north and northeast India and, since recently, spreading worldwide.

The thesis serves two aims. First, it augments existing scholarship on Hindu temple image worship and Caitanya (Gauḍīya) Vaiṣṇavism by focusing on two contemporary temple communities—one in the north Indian pilgrimage centre Vrindavan, the second near Watford, outside London. These represent, respectively, an "embodied community" and a "missionizing tradition," following Barbara Holdrege's typology in her studies of Hindu and Jewish traditions. By considering the practice of worship (*mūrti-sevā*) in terms of two persistent themes, namely rule-governed practice (*vaidhī-sādhana*) and emotion-driven practice (*rāgānuga-sādhana*), I show how the elements of "embodiment" and "missionizing" blend to produce variations on the overarching theme of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, devotion to Kṛṣṇa as the supreme divinity.

Second, by focusing on the divine image in these two temples and the practice of worship, I offer one study of how "religious truth" is understood within these communities in terms of three dimensions of truth proposed by the Comparative Religious Ideas Project at Boston University (1995-1999; Robert C. Neville, et al., *Religious Truth*, State University of New York Press, 2001). At the same time I offer an attempt to extend the scope of that project by adding the dimensions of physical image and ritual practice to its existing dimension, religious ideas. I show how the central notion of devotion to Kṛṣṇa as God (*bhagavān*) entails a complex web of discursive, ritual, and narrative expression to sustain image worship as a truth of embodiment/practice (the opposite of failure) which is also expressive truth (the opposite of deceit) that follows from propositional/epistemological truth (the opposite of error).

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

### *The Grammar and Poetics of Mūrti-sevā: Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Image Worship as Discourse, Ritual, and Narrative*

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This thesis is a study of interrelationships between physical images viewed as sacred and the ideas, expressed textually, that support and surround such images. It shows how the notion of embodiment of divinity is sustained by a “body” of texts that together constitute an ongoing reflection, or “metapractical discourse” for a particular Hindu tradition, Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. This theistic devotional tradition, founded in the sixteenth century, flourishes today largely in north and northeast India and, in recent years, has spread worldwide. The thesis offers a multi-faceted exploration of the theology and practice of *mūrti-sevā*—the attendance to or constant service of sacred images of the tradition’s central and ultimate deity, Kṛṣṇa. It does so by examining and comparing two Kṛṣṇa temples in relation to a triangle of canonical texts to identify dynamics of thought and practice in both traditional and modern contexts.

The thesis serves two aims. First, it augments existing scholarship on Hindu temple image worship and Caitanya (Gauḍīya) Vaiṣṇavism by focusing on two contemporary temple communities—one in the north Indian pilgrimage centre Vrindavan, the second near Watford, outside London. These represent, respectively, an “embodied community” and a “missionizing tradition,” following Barbara Holdrege’s typology in her studies of Hindu and Jewish traditions. By considering the practice of worship (*mūrti-sevā*) in terms of two persistent themes, namely rule-governed practice (*vaidhī-sādhana*) and emotion-driven practice (*rāgānuga-sādhana*), I show how the elements of “embodiment” and “missionizing” blend to produce variations on the overarching theme of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, devotion to Kṛṣṇa as the supreme divinity. Within this principle of order (what I call the “*bhakti* logos”) practitioners negotiate varied configurations of practice related to divine images, adjusting elements of rule-governance and devotional emotion with reference to their wider contexts of practice. In regard to this first aim, the study will serve to counterbalance a tendency in recent scholarship to favour the tradition’s esoteric dimension that comes largely under the rubric *rāgānuga-sādhana*. The equally important missionizing aspect of the tradition which becomes concretised in temples and texts prescribing certain rules of worship (*vaidhī-bhakti*) here receives attention and analysis in terms of both emic and etic categories.

Second, by focusing on the divine image in these two temples and the practice of worship, I offer one study of how “religious truth” is understood within these communities in terms of three subordinate dimensions of truth proposed by the Comparative Religious Ideas Project at Boston University (1995-1999; Robert C. Neville, et al., *Religious Truth*, State University of New York Press, 2001). In that project, “religious truth” served as one of three very broad and “vague” categories with respect to which different religious traditions were compared. In turn, the three subordinate dimensions of religious truth (“religious truth as an epistemological problem,”

“religious truth as expressed in sacred texts and objects,” and “religious truth as cultivation and embodiment”) comprise an important nuancing of the notion of truth, inviting expansion of the initial project focused on religious ideas to include other important elements of religious life, in this case images. This thesis therefore serves to extend the scope of that project by incorporating the dimensions of physical image and ritual practice to its existing dimension, religious ideas. By doing so, sacred images are seen to take a legitimate place in religious truth discourse, not merely as substitutes for ideas, but as “truly religious” expressions and embodiments of divinity. In pursuit of this second aim I show how the central notion of devotion to Kṛṣṇa as God (*bhagavān*) entails a complex web of discursive, ritual, and narrative expression to sustain image worship as a truth of embodiment/practice (the opposite of failure) which is also expressive truth (the opposite of deceit) that follows from propositional/epistemological truth (the opposite of error). This is accomplished largely by showing examples of how the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition (in the two instances of specific temple communities) identifies “felicity conditions”—specifications for finding, preserving, or discovering truth—with respect to images and their worship.

This thesis takes roughly the form of a narrative, leading from earlier to later time, and spatially from India to the West. There are two main divisions, Part One and Part Two, each with two chapters, and a final short Part Three, consisting of conclusions and reflections. Part One focuses on the Indian context of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship, the texts and practice of an “embodied community,” and Part Two attends to the modern context, the “missionizing tradition” arising from textual reflection and unfolding in worldwide mission.

Chapter one explores a set of texts roughly considered “canonical” as a pattern-making context for image worship practice in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition. It first considers briefly how worship becomes increasingly centred on *bhakti* in pre-Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism without entirely rejecting the sacrificial and meditative modalities of religious practice. Then I present three texts—*Bhāgavata Purāna*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and *Haribhaktivilāsa*—as an interconnected textual triangle, each having a definitive “focal point” or “charismatic moment” that specifies devotional truth in terms of its object (Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya, and *mūrtis* of these); in terms of its expression (meditative and performative); and in terms of its practice (preparatory, regular, or occasional). These three texts both draw from and partially form the greater galaxy of Indian ritual practices and reflection on practices centred on temple culture as it emerged from early medieval times (ca. 500-1200 CE) into the Muslim and early modern period (ca. 1200-1750 CE). With the object of devotional truth seen increasingly as physically embodied, the temple becomes the logical locus for expression and enactment of religious truth.

Chapter two examines a particular example of an “embodied community,” the Rādhāramaṇa temple of Vrindavan, as a living Indian context of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship. First there is an account of the origination narrative of Rādhāramaṇa (said to have “self-manifest” in 1542) by the power of the temple founder’s devotion. This leads to a consideration of how biographical portrayal of the founder (Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī—ca. 1500-1586) highlights two contrasting elements in his life that mirror the two canonical threads of *vidhi* and *rāga* encountered in the previous chapter. Following this is a consideration of how truth as expression appears as divine image to “dialogue” with other expressions of truth. The chapter’s second half surveys aspects of

Rādhāramaṇa worship practice as ways of sustaining the *bhakti* logos through balancing its two components, *vidhi* and *rāga*.

As well as describing the first of our two main elements of comparison, Part One serves as background for Part Two, which describes the second element, the modern missionizing context of Caitanyaite image worship. In this second part, chapter three turns attention west by focusing on Caitanya Vaiṣṇava nineteenth- and early twentieth-century revision discourse, in the writings of three prominent figures instrumental for the beginnings of missionary activity—Kedarnath Bhaktivinoda (1838-1914), his son Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī (1874-1936), and the latter's student Bhaktivedanta Swami (1896-1977). The author considers how each of these employ varying degrees and modes of *maintenance*, *renewal*, and *reform* in response to modernity, addressing two major challenges to traditional Hindu life, namely caste and idolatry, through *daivi-varṇāśrama* (spiritualized social order), *śaraṇāgati* (devotional surrender), and *hari-sevānukulatā* (favourable service to God). By revalorizing social order and image worship in terms of spiritual progress and universalism they set the stage for mission, relying heavily on the triangle of texts introduced in chapter one. At the same time they participated in, yet inscribed a place distinct from, the discourse of the more widely heard Hindu revisionists of the time such as Rammohan Roy (1772/74-1833) and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902).

Chapter four shows the unfolding of Caitanyaite mission in the West beginning in the mid-1960's, keeping focus on *mūrti-sevā*. The image of Kṛṣṇa enters into and becomes central to a new calculus of negotiations between ideology and pragmatism in the process of affirming the religious truths of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism in western contexts. The chapter provides an account of western propagation of Kṛṣṇa devotion through Bhaktivedanta Swami's intensive efforts, reminiscent of the traditional Indian *digvijaya*, or "conquering the quarters." Integral to these efforts was his establishing and regulating temple worship for his new and inexperienced recruits. Truth as cultivation is established and sustained in the form of one particular temple, Bhaktivedanta Manor, a missionizing community which soon after opening undergoes growing pains along with internal and external challenges before settling into a relatively steady if varied identity. The third section of this chapter returns to the *vidhi/rāga* mapping for comparison with Rādhāramaṇa to show slight differences in emphasis, by comparing two verses recited as part of daily ritual and taken by this author as "holographic" representations of each temple's ethos; a brief iconographic comparison is also made between the two temples. The composite picture developed from viewing these two temples together suggests complementarity, where both seek *vidhi/rāga* balance as essential to the maintenance of felicity conditions conducive for successful cultivation of *bhakti*. The challenge this brings for the missionizing tradition is illustrated with one current controversy over iconographic modification in the Bhaktivedanta Manor context. The chapter ends with a reflection on Bhaktivedanta Manor as a sacred space in comparison with Rādhāramaṇa and its location in Vrindavan as the same, both as locations for the enactment of the truth of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*.

Part Three draws the experiment in comparison to a close. Attention is first drawn back to the Comparative Religious Ideas Project and its particular approach to comparison in order to assess what has been accomplished in this study of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship in terms of the religious truth category. The vague concept "religious truth" is shown to foster understanding of this tradition in its two "moments"

in four ways—(1) as a basis for aiding in bringing the tradition into wider public discourse; (2) as a reference point from which to consider meaningful similarities and differences between the two instances of the tradition; (3) as a way to extend the category “religious truth” by the particular data, and with images as its locus rather than ideas; and (4) as a means to guard against restricting understanding of the category to the specific assumptions of the tradition. The author then offers a suggestion, based on what has been understood from this tradition of image worship, to expand the Boston Project’s construal of “religious truth” (as the conscious pursuit of felicity conditions) with two additional construals, namely “religious truth as *religation*,” and “religious truth as *līlā*, divine participation.” The first of these emphasizes narrative resolutions of various conceptual oppositions; the second emphasizes the “aimless” or “purposeless” performance of devotional acts. This expanded construal helps to understand different emphases in worship practice according to worship context.

The study concludes with a consideration of the notion of symbol, and how it is held in tension within the tradition, such that a sacred image can be seen both as such and as the deity proper. The notion of play as “a being at once of two minds” helps to explain this phenomenon as well as to suggest a bridge between image worship understood religiously and image worship understood academically.

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To my several teachers, since day one.

## List of Abbreviations

BhP – Bhāgavata Purāṇa	
BhR – Bhaktiratnākāra	
BoVP – Brāhmaṇa o Vaiṣṇavera Tāratamya-Viśayaka Siddhānta—Pariśiṣṭa	
BṛBh – Bṛhadbhāgavatāmṛta	
BTG – Back To Godhead (Journal)	
CC – Caitanya-caritāmṛta	
HBV – Haribhaktivilāsa	

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## INTRODUCTION

The stairs leading from central London's Soho Street Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple down to the street are steep and narrow. Still, it was relatively easy for me, with the help of one other *pūjārī* (temple priest) to carry the bright yellow and white wooden image, “Lady Subhadra,” from the temple room down into the waiting Bentley limousine to join her two divine brothers, “Jagannātha” and “Baladeva” for their even easier and quick ride to Marble Arch. Once arrived there, I helped carefully lift up, one after another, the three smiling figures onto their waiting *ratha*, a modest thirty-eight-foot high replica of its massive sixteen-wheeled and much taller prototype in Purī, Orissa. There, off the Bay of Bengal coast, since centuries the annual *rathayātrā* of Jagannātha (Lord of the universe) draws hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, who wait for several hours as the three huge images are inched up makeshift ramps by straining scores of priests onto their three separate cars before commencing to draw them toward Guṇḍicā Mandir, the procession's destination two miles distant.

Leaving Marble Arch toward Trafalgar Square that Sunday in June 2003, viewing the procession from on the car, seeing the three or four thousand British paraders (including many of Indian origin or ancestry) I recalled being here on this same occasion thirty years before when Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (1896-1977), the founder of the “Hare Krishna Movement” had led the procession. It was all strange then, and it was still strange now, to both witness and be part of this odd mix of ancient and modern, religious and secular life. What was happening here? Was this procession essentially a critique of modernity, or was it rather part of modernity's conspiracy to “rule out the possibility of transcendence in principle”?<sup>1</sup> Or was it a manifestation of transcendent, godly play? Or all three at once?

Others have also pondered the mix of tradition and modernity with reference to Jagannātha. In his recent book *Hinduism and Modernity*, David Smith cites Anthony Giddens, who describes the “erratic, runaway character of modernity” as an experience like “riding a juggernaut.” Contrasting two abstract but compelling notions—modernity and Hinduism—Smith juxtaposes the modernity-juggernaut of capitalism with the huge Jagannātha processional car of Hindu tradition (the word *juggernaut*

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<sup>1</sup> Huston Smith, *Beyond the Postmodern Mind* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 134. Cited in Scharlemann: 82. Smith's complete sentence is, “An epistemology that aims relentlessly at control rules out the possibility of transcendence in principle.”

being a British colonial neologism derived from Jagannātha). He writes,

While the original Jagannath car carried images of the gods that people worshipped, the modernity that is capitalism as it proceeds along its trajectory befuddles us with fetishisms, with factitious, fabricated images. The temple car characteristic of the lumbering, unmanoeuvrable, dangerous quality of Hinduism is transferred to its opposite, modernity, which is fast, unmanoeuvrable, and no less dangerous. (Smith 2003: 23)

Both traditional religious and modern secular dangers of excess have been the object of much (modern and “post-modern”) scholarly theorizing. One product, initially dominated by a spirit of self-assured scientism, has been the modern study of religion. A preoccupation for thinkers such as E. B. Tylor, James Frazer, Max Müller, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx, was to discern civilization’s advancement in science’s triumph over religion, at least in all matters concerning the visible world. Should religion still persist at all, its dangers would, they were sure, be overcome as it assumed a pure spirituality free from the “fetishism” of image worship or similar practices. But as Joanne Waghorne has noted, India proved problematic to these theorists, since what they considered primitive modes of religion thrived in an obviously non-primitive society (2-3).

Neither have such well-meaning early, nor later more refined scholarly efforts, slowed the movements of Jagannātha, who rather has sped up considerably in recent years, taking to the streets of major cities of the world. Since 1967, Jagannātha (in smaller format than his Indian prototype) is devotedly worshipped not only by Indians, but also by westerners, converts to a Hindu tradition characterised by the worship of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa as the supreme divinity. Nor, of course, has Jagannātha gone international alone. Accompanying him and other Kṛṣṇa images (*mūrtis*) are sacred texts that are preached, read, recited, imbibed, and eventually expanded by Kṛṣṇa devotees. These texts constitute a sophisticated discursive, narrative, and ritual-injunctive scriptural tradition that sustains and reflects on worship practice and the object(s) of worship. On the basis of these texts, such worship is conceived as a particular mode of devotional and transformative practice (*sādhana-bhakti*) that is viable for a growing worldwide community of practitioners identifying themselves as followers of Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (1486-1533)—as Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I will elaborate on the Bengali ecstatic-saint Caitanya (pronounced Chaitanya) and his revival of Kṛṣṇa worship in coming chapters. Suffice for now to mention that his Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* movement centred on the chanting of Kṛṣṇa’s names (*harināma*), the hearing and recitation

In her discussion on past and present scholarship on Hinduism Waghorne further observes that “the embodiment of divinity” is the “central feature of Hinduism and . . . a central feature in the study of religion” (7). Integral to the embodiment of divinity in Hinduism, I would suggest, are the “bodies” of texts that together constitute an ongoing reflection, or “metapractical discourse” (Kasulis 1992), for what is actually multiple and interacting “Hinduisms.”

I use “Hinduism” and “Hinduisms” guardedly as general terms calling for specification, terms for what is a complex landscape of interrelated traditions, one of which can be identified, again rather generally, as Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. To complicate matters further, in its contemporary missionizing orientation this particular tradition is noteworthy for its universalistic aims and consequent discomfort with the designation “Hindu” with its implied reference to a tradition embedded in geographically and culturally specific ethnicity (Nye 2001: 30). Taking such universalist discomfort into account, the consideration of embodied divinity in the current practice and metapractical discourse of Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇavas might be especially valuable within the wider study of religion as well as within the study of Hindu traditions.

The aim of this study will be twofold. First, I hope to augment existing scholarship on the contemporary phenomenon of Caitanyaite worship by focusing on relationships between text and image as these pertain to practice and the purported aim of practice within two specific temple contexts of this tradition, one Indian and one western. This will serve to counterbalance a tendency in recent scholarship to concentrate on the tradition’s esoteric dimension that comes largely under the rubric *rāgānuga-bhakti* (emotion-driven devotion). The public nature of temple practice and missionizing calls for more attention to the exoteric dimension, under the rubric *vaidhī-bhakti* (rule-governed devotion). I intend to show how, in these two contexts of Indian and western temple worship, the two dimensions of practice interrelate to sustain what I call the *bhakti* logos, an all-encompassing understanding of devotional order that frames thinking about divine embodiment, practicing becoming divinized,

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(*śravanam* and *kīrtanam*) of devotional scriptures that proclaim Kṛṣṇa’s supremacy and celebrate his earthly descent, and the worship of his image (*mūrti-sevā*). His followers and the tradition arising from his teachings comprise Gauḍīya (Bengali) Vaiṣṇavism, or, as I shall call it in this work, Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism or Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇavism. Its central text, the Sanskrit *Bhāgavata Purāna*, presents Kṛṣṇa as the highest divinity who descended just prior to the commencement of the present degraded age (Kali-yuga), some five millennia ago.



and relating divine and human agency. Within this overarching understanding practitioners negotiate varied configurations of practice related to divine images, adjusting elements of rule-governance and devotional emotion with reference to their wider contexts of practice.

Second, I aim to contribute to the comparative study of religion by offering a two-fold variation on a comparative scheme undertaken by the Comparative Religious Ideas Project of Boston University (see next section). I will show that it is possible and worthwhile to incorporate worshipped images into comparison of religious ideas, in that images both express ideas and are the subject of considerable reflection expressed in texts about images and their worship. The broad comparative category “religious truth” is useful for this purpose. By narrow “calibration,” comparing between two Caitanya Vaiṣṇava sub-traditions, rather than across major families of religious traditions, one can gain a depth of understanding of such a particular tradition while still placing it in position for more distant comparison.

### Method: The Comparative Religious Ideas Project

I recognise that comparison as a method in religious studies is viewed askance, and not without good reason, as Kimberly Patton and Benjamin Ray have observed:

The substantial and often well-founded charges brought against the comparative method are many: intellectual imperialism, universalism, theological foundationalism, and anti-contextualism . . . The focus of deconstructive scrutiny “reveals” it . . . at worst, as a subjective melange of culturally biased perceptions that cannot but distort or, at best, as an act of imaginative, associative “play.” (1-2)

Yet if one is aware of these dangers one can strive to avoid them. Comparison can then serve valuable purposes, these same authors note, “as an intellectually creative enterprise, not as a science but as an art—an imaginative and critical act of mediation and redescription in the service of knowledge” (4). This being a study about the “poetics”—the art, of *mūrti-sevā*, a good measure of creativity is called for to bring into meaningful juxtaposition a complex set of religious ideas, images, practices, and institutions that sustain these.

“Religious truth” will feature significantly in this study, as a broad category for comparison. Like comparative religion, the notion of religious truth will bring a shudder to many a good scholar of religion. As Huston Smith has noted (in Patton

and Ray's volume), the idea of Truth has been "severely impacted" by the postmodern "revolt against wholes—metaphysics, metanarratives, and pejoratively, totalism" (179). But like so many academic fashions, this revolt has spawned its own excesses, its own juggernaut-like dangers, one being potential loss of touch with the real concerns of those being studied, religious people.

"Religious truth" was employed by the Comparative Religious Ideas Project at Boston University, conducted from 1995 to 1999 under the direction of Robert Cummings Neville, as the final of three major "vague categories" for comparison after extensive discussion among the Project's participants (Neville 2001b: Chs. 8 & 9; 2001c: xvi-xvii).<sup>3</sup> In view of that Project's understanding of the comparative enterprise as "an ongoing process" (*ibid.*, xx), I offer the present study as a modest contribution, in the hope that the Project will be enriched by the addition of one dimension to it. The new dimension is religious *images*. With good reason the Boston Project chose to restrict itself to the comparison of *ideas* as presented in important *texts* from the various religious traditions compared (*ibid.*, 2001c: xxi-xxii). Even within this restriction they found their task dauntingly complex. And doubtless within this restriction their work is far from exhausted. Yet in light of Joanne Waghorne's comment on the centrality of embodied divinity in Hinduism, I propose, at risk of attempting the unmanageable, to complicate the matter—with *matter*, the presentation and representation of divinity in earthly elements.

Here, the study of the worship of images in a particular theistic Hindu Indian tradition as a theme of comparison is not to replace the comparison of religious ideas. Rather it is to focus on religious ideas about and in relation to images, and therefore by no means to abandon texts, but rather to consider texts in relation to images. As I have already hinted, one component of my general argument is that in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition images are inseparable from texts; that practitioners understand and relate to each with the help of the other. In the Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇava tradition this is especially the case, where a wealth of texts discuss, narrate, and prescribe ritual, about images. Conversely images inform texts, as "imagery" that brings the abstract to the concrete, and grounds readers in sensory experience.

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<sup>3</sup> The first category was "the human condition," and the second "ultimate realities." These three themes became the topics of three volumes produced by the Project and published in the year 2001 (see Sources).

I focus on “religious truth” as the principal respect to which Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship and thought might be compared. One reason for this is that “truth” is an explicit concern in the texts I will discuss, a concern specifically related to the significance of images and image worship. A second reason is that, as W. J. T. Mitchell shows, the rightful “institutional discourses” for “the notion of the image ‘as such’” are philosophy and theology (9-11). These disciplines both purport to be pre-eminently concerned with truth, the latter more specifically with “religious” truth. Necessarily but secondarily, the two other categories of the Boston Project’s comparison, namely “the human condition” and “ultimate realities,” will also receive attention.

The Boston Comparative Religious Ideas Project recognizes three major sub-categories or “specifications” of religious truth, namely “religious truth as an epistemological problem;” “religious truth as expressed in sacred texts and objects;” and “religious truth as cultivation and embodiment” (Neville 2001c: 149-59; see Fig. 1 below). As textual orientations, these correspond roughly to the three categories of text in the thesis title, “discourse,” “narrative,” and “ritual,” respectively.<sup>4</sup> Neville et. al. sometimes use the term “felicity” to encompass the three dimensions of truth, and they point to the enormous diversity of “felicity conditions” to highlight the restrictedness within which a given proposition, expression, or practice might be considered true in a religious tradition (ibid., 174-75). Such restrictions or conditions must be taken into account together with the multi-dimensionality of truth as what is opposite to error (the epistemological dimension), what is opposite to deceit (truth as expression) and what is opposite to failure (truth as cultivation) (ibid., 162-67) in assessing how particular claims, expressions, or practices “fit” into a tradition’s self-understanding.

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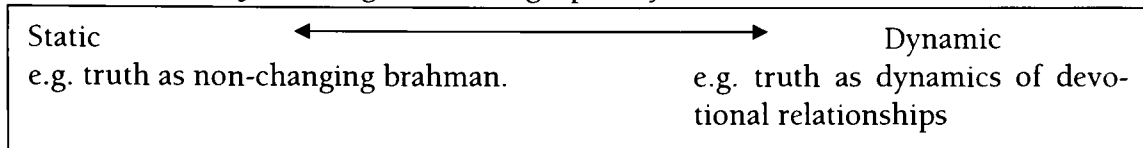
<sup>4</sup> “Discourse,” “Ritual,” and “Narrative” are three “interrelated realms” of Hindu textuality selected by Gavin Flood for attention in his Introduction to *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* (5).

## Figure 1. The Boston Project's Three Types of Religious Truth<sup>5</sup>

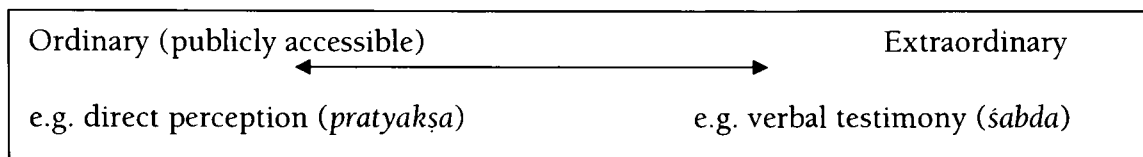
### 1. Religious truth as an epistemological problem (truth vs. error)

Three spectra: Reference, Meaning, and Means of Engagement<sup>6</sup>

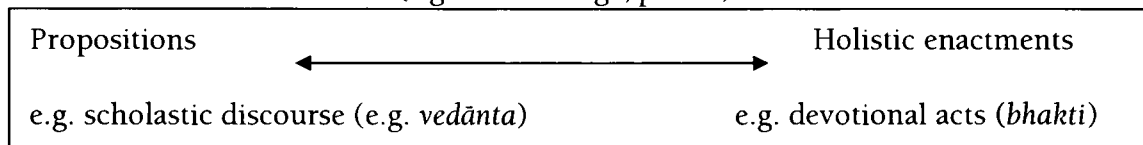
REFERENCE (objects of right knowledge, *prameyas*)



MEANING (means of right knowledge, *pramānas*)

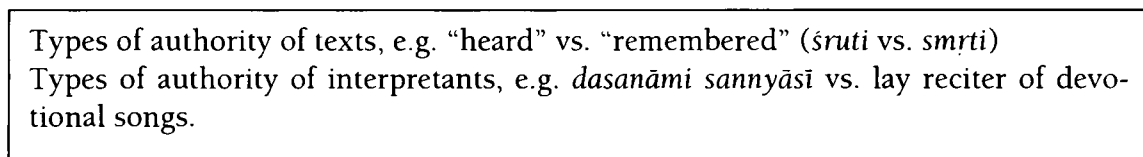


MEANS OF ENGAGEMENT (right knowledge, *pramā*)

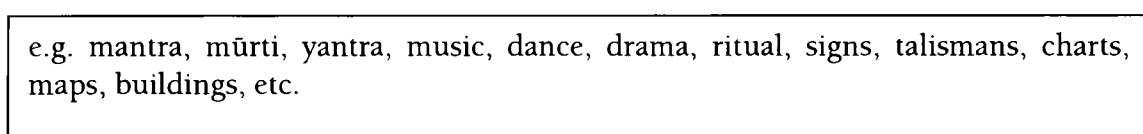


### 2. Religious truth as expressed in sacred texts and objects (truth vs. deceit)

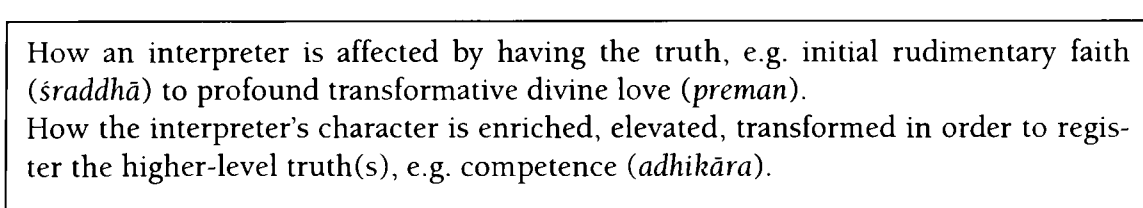
TEXTS



OBJECTS



### 3. Religious truth as cultivation and embodiment (truth vs. failure)



<sup>5</sup> Based on Neville and Wildman 2001: 45, 149-67

<sup>6</sup> The Indian classical terminology, *prameya*, *pramāna*, *pramā*, is my addition (based on F Clooney's chapter in the same volume), as are the examples (“e.g.”) within the boxes.

Such nuancing of the nature of religious truth greatly facilitates this study by making “space” for the consideration of images as expressions of truth in conjunction with the practice of image worship as practice of truth as cultivation. One component of my task will be to show instances of how the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition identifies felicity conditions for the finding, preserving, or discovery of truth with respect to images and their worship.

Also conducive to this study is the Project’s recognition of two interwoven strands to the study of religion, namely its “givenness” and its contingency (*ibid.*, 208-11). While contingency points to convention and the cultural construction of religion, givenness leaves room for at least the possibility of transcendence, divinity, and divine agency. A non-reductive study of a religious tradition would, I suggest, require allowance of “space” for the latter, that which constitutes the substance of most religious traditions’ truth claims. However, the study would be incomplete without recognition of religion’s constructedness, something which surely most religious traditions also recognize in themselves to varying degrees.

### **Objects of Comparison: Embodied and Missionizing Communities**

Unlike the Boston Project, which compared six major world religious traditions with and among each other, this study will be narrowly calibrated, confining itself mainly to two “moments” within one Vaiṣṇava tradition. By keeping to this narrow range of comparison, a greater degree of “thick description” can be achieved than would be possible otherwise (Geertz: 6).<sup>7</sup> One might think of this narrow ranged view analogously with commonplace optics: Perceiving a distant object with both eyes, even though our eyes are so close to each other, provides us with a sense of perspective and depth that lacks if one eye is closed. In the course of this study, comparisons with other traditions, especially those with which Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas may see themselves competing, will suggest themselves but will not be pursued.

Concerned as I am with abstract themes—the mixture of tradition and modernity as it relates to images and texts—historical and geographical specificity will be appropriate. Two temple communities—the Rādhāramaṇa temple in the north Indian pilgrimage town of Vrindavan, and Bhaktivedanta Manor, north of London—

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<sup>7</sup> “Thick description” is anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s famous term (borrowed from Gilbert Ryle) for detailed representation of a particular culture or practice within that culture in pursuit of a semiotic approach, to “aid . . . in gaining access to the conceptual world in which [the] subjects live . . .” (24).

will be the two moments, or loci, of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship for this study. Rādhāramaṇa temple will represent what Barbara Holdrege calls an “embodied community,” while Bhaktivedanta Manor will represent what she calls a “missionizing tradition.”<sup>8</sup> As Holdrege points out, and as we shall see in this case, these two types do not form a simple dichotomous opposition, but rather represent a spectrum of orientation. Here I will show how this is the case in this particular instance, keeping in the foreground the practice of Kṛṣṇa image worship as a means common to both of expressing and cultivating religious truth.

To aid in identifying areas of similarity and difference with reference to image worship and how these might be significant, I will introduce four additional conceptual schemes, one emic and three etic. Keeping in mind Jonathan Z. Smith’s dictum that “map is not territory” (following Alfred Korzybski; Gill: 457), these will serve as “mapping” devices to navigate the complexities of Caitanyaite tradition in these two contexts. Here I introduce these only briefly, to elaborate on them in appropriate places in later chapters.

The first two “maps” are “two dimensional,” each with two “coordinates” that we can think of as horizontal and vertical vectors (see Figure 2 below). I already alluded to the first of these above, a scheme using emic terms, important especially in relation to truth as cultivation and consisting of two vectors of worship. The Sanskrit term *vidhi*, literally “rule,” “regulation,” or “procedure” indicates one vector or “axis” of lesser and greater emphasis on injunctive practice. Loosely speaking this is the “grammar” of image worship. We can think of the degree of attention or lack of attention to *vidhi* as indicating the horizontal vector in a field graph. The second vector (the vertical axis in our chart) is indicated by the term *rāga*, suggesting (amidst a wide range of meanings) “emotion,” “passion,” or “feeling,” constituting the “poetics” of worship, also attended to in greater or lesser degrees.<sup>9</sup> This map is important as a way to show that these two principles are interdependent and not in simple opposition, as is sometimes wrongly thought. A practitioner can, in other words, be

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<sup>8</sup> Holdrege writes, “Embodied communities include religious traditions such as Hindu and Jewish traditions that define their tradition-identities primarily in terms of ethnic, linguistic, geographic, and cultural categories tied to a particular people, language, land, and sociocultural system. Missionizing traditions, on the other hand, include religious traditions such as Christian and Buddhist traditions that construct their tradition-identities primarily in terms of purportedly universal teachings that are intended for potentially all peoples and cultures” (2003: 120).

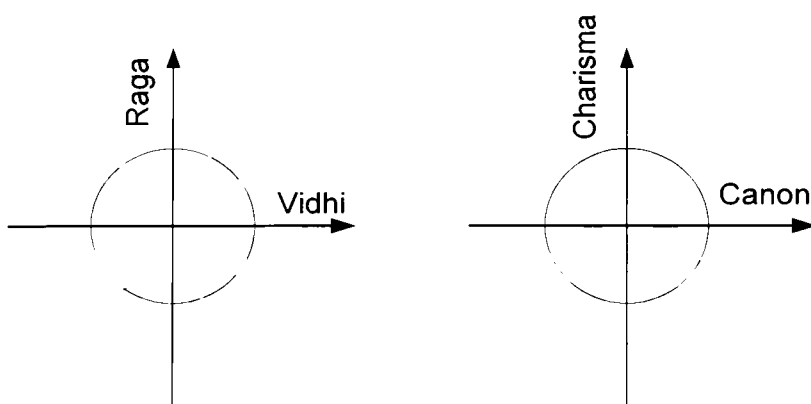
<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to Shrivatsa Goswami for this analogy of grammar and poetics with *vidhi* and *rāga*.

both very attentive to scriptural rules of worship *and* highly absorbed in devotional feeling, or the converse, in countless combinations.<sup>10</sup>

A two-fold etic parallel to the above map consists in the terms “canon” and “charisma,” which Vasudha Dalmia and her colleagues call “often present constituents and important points of reference” in religious traditions (1). Again, although these concepts can be seen as oppositional in character, representing, respectively, the static and the dynamic in a tradition or community (von Stietencron, *ibid.*, 14), a more fruitful mapping in this study will result by thinking of them as interactive “perpendicular” vectors. Increased exercise of charisma, (what for now I will simply call “attractive influence and authority”) need not oppose or cancel the influence or observance of canon (the text or set of texts bearing sacred authority for a particular community), which itself celebrates charismatic authority. My interest in canon and charisma and their relationship is directly connected to my concern for text and image as interrelated. Whereas charisma is usually associated with religious leaders, it can also be identified with religious images (von Stietencron: 25-27; Nye 2001: 63). And canon, generally thought of as the constellation of a community’s authoritative texts, can be extended to include images, as “visual canon” similarly authoritative for a community.

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Figure 2. Vidhi/Rāga and Canon/Charisma mapping



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<sup>10</sup> This model is derived from or analogous to sociologist Veena Das’s mapping of *purity* and *auspiciousness*. By charting two axes of purity/impurity and auspiciousness/inauspiciousness perpendicular to each other, she shows the irreducibility of either of these concepts to the other in a Gujurati Hindu context of domestic and cosmic rituals (V Das: 143).

I draw a third, “three dimensional” etic map from anthropologist Roy Rappaport’s evolutionary analysis of ritual. Rappaport shows how ritual, especially religious ritual, constitutes a more or less invariable “liturgical order” comprised of temporal, simultaneous, and hierarchical “dimensions.” He notes that the temporal or sequential dimension of ritual and the simultaneous dimension of “multiple significata” have received more scholarly attention than the “hierarchical” dimension. Following his scheme, it will be useful to consider four “levels of understanding” in this hierarchy. These range from what is most abstract and unvarying at the top of the hierarchy, what he calls “Ultimate Sacred Postulates;” to “cosmological axioms” about fundamental cosmic order; to “specific rules of conduct” in ritual for relating persons to axioms and Postulates; and finally to what is most concrete and varying, namely “formal indices of prevailing conditions” (Rappaport: 170; 263-66). This scheme will help illuminate how ideas relate to images in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. It will also help to understand a crucial shift in understanding of the traditional Indian social system, *varṇāśrama*, as a reinterpretation of a central cosmological axiom.

Finally, as an aid to nuance the tradition/modernity dichotomy and to give due place for history in our study, I draw from Marilyn Waldman’s proposal to recognize three positive stances adopted by a religious tradition—maintenance, renewal, and reform—as loci of change in response to modernity (Waldman: 318-26).

### Why Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, and from Whose Perspective?

Particular features of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition make it promising for study as an Indian theistic *bhakti* tradition featuring image worship. Some of these are (1) the richness of its textual (especially narrative,<sup>11</sup> but also second-order) reflection on praxis, especially regarding the relation between rule-governed and emotion-driven worship; (2) its ways of addressing questions of divine gender by emphasizing the worship of the divine feminine Rādhā together with the divine masculine Kṛṣṇa, exemplified by the life-story of Śrī Caitanya; (3) the particular ways the tradition blends this-worldly and other-worldly spirituality through devotional aesthetics;

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<sup>11</sup> I have avoided the term “myth” throughout this thesis, preferring the term “narrative” because of the connotation of falsity associated with the term “myth.” If we subscribe to the possibility that “religious truth” can exist in various forms without necessarily having to first settle all issues of epistemological truth (as Neville, et al, suggest), it becomes apparent why “narrative” offers a more sympathetic term for what we are dealing with.

(4) its self-consciousness as a missionary community, negotiating, for example, between birthright-based class stratification and egalitarian inclusivism.<sup>12</sup>

A second reason for my concentrating on the Caitanyaite tradition is my own personal involvement with it as a practitioner since several years. While modern scholarship tends to view with suspicion the combination of practice and scholarship for the study of religion, I would argue that practice can add depth of insight without succumbing to advocacy, and that the practitioner/scholar may be in the best position to call other practitioners' attention to the illuminations and valid challenges to a tradition offered by scholars.

"Practitioner-scholarship," if I may call it that, involves boundary crossing, a constant movement between realms of discourse.<sup>13</sup> This enabled, in my case, a level of research not easily gained by one entirely "outside" the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition. In my case, the four months' observation, interviewing, and gathering of texts at the Rādhāramaṇa temple in Vrindavan was a very special situation of border-crossing, in which I experienced being regarded as both an outsider, as a westerner, and (to varying degrees) an insider practitioner of a common tradition. Conversely, in Bhaktivedanta Manor I am seen as an insider practitioner and participant whenever I visit there, but I regard myself as rather an outsider, preoccupied with an academic "observer's" view of the community and its activities.

A certain bias may be expected from my being an "insider" to one more than the other of the two temples being compared. Being aware of this bias and acknowledging it helps to overcome it, as does the process of comparison, which has forced me to, in a sense, see and think from other perspectives. To be a "convert" to the tradition brings additional considerations of border-crossing. The reflexivity that comes from the multiple border-crossing (non-Vaiṣṇava/Vaiṣṇava; Vaiṣṇava/academic) is, I think, conducive for drawing a nuanced picture of the object of study that, at the same time, resists reductive conclusions about the nature of religion and religious practice.

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Hopkins (1999: 69) has written on the need for documentation of missionary Caitanya Vaiṣṇava history: "ISKCON [the International Society for Krishna Consciousness] is not the first Asian religion to find a following in the West, but it is the first to gain such a widespread following without losing its Indian identity. As a result, it has been able to maintain continuity for Hindus in the West while also serving the needs of Western disciples. This is one of the great stories in world religious history, and it should be told with full attention to the details of how it happened."

<sup>13</sup> See Tweed for a discussion of this theme, emphasizing the non-fixity of the interpreter in religious studies.

## Overview of Related Studies

A considerable range of works related to this present study deserves brief attention. Here I will mention and comment on what I consider the most important of these. The classical work on Bengal (Caitanya) Vaiṣṇavism is S. K. De's *Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (1961). This book concentrates on the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Sanskrit and Bengali literature of the movement, providing summaries of the texts and biographies of their authors to show how, in his view, the movement became dominated by the Vrindavan community. This book includes a summary of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's *Haribhaktivilāsa*, one of the important texts for image worship I will discuss in chapter one. A wider historical picture of religion and temple development in the Vrindavan area is Entwistle's *Braj—Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage* (1987). A useful article for understanding nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historical background for contemporary Caitanyaite mission is Thomas Hopkins' "The Social and Religious Background for Transmission of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism to the West" (1989).

Also on the theme of pilgrimage and temples in Vraja (the area surrounding Vrindavan) is David Haberman's account of his own experience on *ban yātrā* (forest pilgrimage), *Journey Through the Twelve Forests* (1994). This book takes a multifaceted approach framed in personal chronical, pausing to make historical and cultural anthropological comment, especially on the process and meaning of pilgrimage. Haberman argues that pilgrimage in Vraja does not support theories of pilgrimage emphasizing procedure between two points, but rather is dominated by the theme of *wandering* which heightens the sense of Kṛṣṇa's unpredictable presence.

In his earlier book, *Acting as a Way of Salvation: A Study of Rāgānugā Bhakti Sādhana* (1988), as the title suggests Haberman focuses on what is generally seen as a prominent feature of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava devotional practice, namely its more meditative, internal exercises by relatively accomplished practitioners following (*anugā*) Kṛṣṇa's intimate associates to cultivate spiritual emotion (*rāga*). This study has called attention to this important aspect of the tradition, inspiring more studies on *rāgānuga-bhakti* and related topics, especially articles published in the *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies*.

The subject of Hindu image worship has received treatment in several works of recent years. These generally frame the topic sociologically in terms of "popular"

religion, as C. J. Fuller does in his book *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (1992). The scope of this work is necessarily wide, but draws mainly from observation of one south Indian temple. A short but seminal work, Diana Eck's *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (1981), attempts also to encompass Indian (Hindu) image worship as a totality, but focuses on the theme of religious viewing (*darśana*) to show how meaning in image worship centres on the sense of relationship gained through this simple act. A closer look at a wide range of specific worship traditions is provided by the collection of articles *Gods of Flesh, Gods of Stone: The Embodiment of Divinity in India* (1985, reprint 1996), edited by Joanne Waghorne and Norman Cutler. This book, as mentioned earlier, argues for the importance of divine embodiment in Indian religion, and concludes with a useful summary and discussion of persistent themes, namely impermanence; divinity as a mode of perception; the divine image as microcosm and hologram; divinity and divinization; chains of divinity; and multiple dimensions of the divine. Taking a different tack, blending art history with religious studies, is Richard Davis' *Lives of Indian Images* (1997). This book offers several intriguing detailed accounts or "biographies" of various Indian images, placing them in the centre of the communities that worshipped them and amidst the political contestations that revolved around them. In his opening chapter, Davis contrasts the original south Indian setting of a particular Śiva image with its 1985 museum setting in Washington, D.C. to reflect on the importance of context and differences in perception. This reflection provided the initial impetus for this present study.

More specifically related to the two temples I discuss in this study, the first work is Margaret Case's *Seeing Krishna: The Religious World of a Brahman Family in Vrindaban* (2000). This book provides a window for viewing the Rādhāramaṇa temple by focusing on one of the five families of Rādhāramaṇa priests and its efforts to revive dramatic and musical arts of Vraja, centred in temple worship. The emphasis is on narrative, relating contemporary occurrences associated with the family and the temple with Kṛṣṇa-līlā (the divine pastimes of Kṛṣṇa/Rādhāramaṇa) and how daily and festival worship is seen in relation to *līlā*. In an altogether different mode and attending to the other temple of this study, Bhaktivedanta Manor in England, is Malory Nye's *Multiculturalism and Minority Religions in Britain: Krishna Consciousness, Religious Freedom, and the Politics of Location* (2001). This work is a very narrowly focused account and critical analysis of Bhaktivedanta Manor's ultimately suc-

cessful effort to keep its function as a public place of worship despite sustained efforts by local villagers to have it closed.

While there are no other works (to my knowledge) specifically on Bhaktivedanta Manor, there have been numerous studies on the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), the missionary organization of which Bhaktivedanta Manor is the U.K. headquarters. The classic work of these is Stillson Judah's *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture* (1974), followed by others similarly concerned to analyse the mission as part of a western social phenomenon, using sociological and anthropological methods. Bromley and Shinn's edited volume *Krishna Consciousness in the West* (1989) (already mentioned above with reference to Hopkins' article), provides a valuable survey of these kinds of approach. As a volume in the New Religious Movements Series of Aquarian Press, Kim Knott's *My Sweet Lord: The Hare Krishna Movement* (1986b) is a brief survey of ISKCON theology and practice with the aim of countering public misconceptions arising from media misrepresentations. One study of a specific ISKCON temple (in Philadelphia) is provided by Nurit Zaidman-Dvir in her doctoral thesis, "When the Deities Are Asleep: Processes of Change in the Hare Krishna Temple" (1994). This study focuses on how the temple shifted from a semi-monastic community of western converts to one with greater congregational involvement of ethnic Indians. For information on further studies of ISKCON, see chapter four, fn. 7.

## Overview of the Thesis

This thesis takes roughly the form of a narrative, leading from earlier to later time, and spatially from India to the West. There are two main divisions, Part One and Part Two, each with two chapters, and a final short Part Three, consisting of conclusions and reflections. Part One focuses on the Indian context of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship, the texts and practice of an "embodied community," and Part Two attends to the modern context, the "missionizing tradition" arising from textual reflection and unfolding in worldwide mission.

In Chapter One I explore a set of texts roughly considered "canonical" as a pattern-making context for image worship practice in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition. I first consider briefly how worship becomes increasingly centred on *bhakti* in pre-Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. Then I present three texts—*Bhāgavata Purāna*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and *Haribhaktivilāsa*—as an interconnected textual triangle, each having

a definitive “focal point” or “charismatic moment” that specifies devotional truth in terms of its object (Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya, and *mūrtis* of these); in terms of its expression (meditative and performative); and in terms of its practice (preparatory, regular, or occasional).

Chapter Two offers a view of our particular example of an “embodied community,” the Radharamana temple of Vrindavan, as a living Indian context of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship. First I give an account of the origination narrative of Rādhāramaṇa by the power of the temple’s founder’s devotion, considering how truth as expression appears as divine image to “dialogue” with other expressions of truth. In the chapter’s second half I survey aspects of Rādhāramaṇa worship practice as ways of sustaining the *bhakti* logos through balancing its two components, *vidhi* and *rāga*.

As well as describing the first of our two main elements of comparison, Part One serves as background for Part Two, which describes the second element, the modern missionizing context of Caitanyaite image worship. In this second part, Chapter Three turns our attention west by focusing on Caitanya Vaiṣṇava nineteenth- and early twentieth-century renewal discourse, in the writings of three prominent figures instrumental for the beginnings of missionary activity. Here I consider how each of these show varying degrees and ways of maintenance, renewal, and reform to address two major challenges to traditional Hindu life, namely caste and idolatry. By revalorizing social order and image worship in terms of spiritual progress and universalism they set the stage for mission.

In Chapter Four I give an account of western propagation of Kṛṣṇa devotion through Bhaktivedanta Swami’s intensive efforts, keeping attention on his establishing and regulating temple worship for his new and inexperienced recruits. Truth as cultivation is established and sustained in the form of Bhaktivedanta Manor, a missionizing community which soon undergoes growing pains along with internal and external challenges before settling into a relatively steady if varied identity. In the third section of this chapter I return to the *vidhi/rāga* mapping for comparison with Rādhāramaṇa to show slight differences in emphasis; then I describe one current controversy over iconographic modification to illustrate the delicacy of the *vidhi/rāga* balance for finding the felicity conditions thought conducive for successful cultivation. I end the chapter with a reflection on Bhaktivedanta Manor as a sacred space in comparison with Rādhāramaṇa and its location in Vrindavan as the same, both as locations for the enactment of the truth of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*.

In Part Three I draw to a close the experiment in comparison. First I bring attention back to the Comparative Religious Ideas Project and its particular approach to comparison in order to assess what has been accomplished in this study of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship in terms of the religious truth category. Then I sketch possible ways the study could be usefully expanded to enrich understanding of images in Hindu devotional contexts.

### Terminology and Translation

I use the Sanskrit term *mūrti* and the English term *image* rather interchangeably. Both terms have quite broad fields of meaning with a good deal in common between them, enough to justify this selection. With few or no exceptions I mean, in both cases, a physical, three-dimensional icon or statue that is worshipped as a form of a divinity. The term *sevā* is used occasionally, especially in concert with *mūrti*, i.e. *mūrti-sevā*, to indicate worshipful service, usually ongoing or regular.

### Spelling, Pronunciation, and Use of Diacritic Marks

Sanskrit words and names are generally rendered with standard diacritical marks; but certain words commonly (or less commonly) anglicized will appear so, such as brahmin, brahmanical, and Vrindavan. The term Brahman (the ontological category) is distinguished from *Brāhmaṇas*, the genre of texts. I have chosen to retain diacritical marks with the name Kṛṣṇa, although this might well be rendered as “Krishna.” Sanskrit, Hindi or Bengali words and phrases are generally rendered in italics. Pronunciation of vowels in all three cases is generally akin to Italian. The letter *c* is pronounced as the English *ch*, hence *arcanam* would be pronounced “archanam,” Caitanya would be pronounced “Chaitanya.” A horizontal line over a vowel, as in *ā*, indicates a doubling of the length of the vowel’s pronunciation. The expressions *ṣ* and *ś* can both be pronounced as in English *sh*, hence Vaiṣṇava would be pronounced “Vaishnava,” and *śāstra* would be pronounced “shaastra.”

# PART ONE: Embodied Truth

## CHAPTER ONE

### Texts As Context: Core Textual Sources and Patterns for Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Image Worship

#### I.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will show essential contours of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava textual corpus as it pertains to image worship, an element of devotional practice (*sādhana-bhakti*). An exhaustive investigation of the sources of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava temple ritual is far beyond the scope of this work. My purpose here is rather to identify a particular religious locale, defined substantially by three texts which become the basis for numerous further writings that constitute Caitanyaite written tradition as a whole. These three texts draw from and partially form the greater galaxy of Indian ritual practices centred on temple culture as it emerged from early medieval times (ca. 500-1200 CE) into the Muslim and early modern period (ca. 1200-1750 CE). At the same time they provide the basis for the distinctive features of the Caitanyaite constellation of practice traditions developing from the sixteenth century to the present day. This is the case, in slightly differing ways, for both the Indian and the western temples we will be investigating in chapters two and four.

Tradition holds that Caitanya Mahāprabhu wrote naught but eight Sanskrit verses summarising his creed, being satisfied that certain already existing scriptures, especially the *Bhāgavata Purāna* (BhP), adequately expressed the truths of Kṛṣṇa devotion.<sup>1</sup> For this and further reasons to be explained later, the Sanskrit *Bhāgavata Purāna* will be in the foreground of this chapter, as will the early seventeenth century Bengali work *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (CC) of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja. The Sanskrit work *Haribhaktivilāsa* (HBV) authored by Caitanya's follower Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī completes a triangle of texts defining and framing but not confining our subject.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These eight verses, known collectively as the *Śikṣāstakam*, appear in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* as 3.20.12, 16, 21, 29, 32, 36, 39, and 47.

<sup>2</sup> On the authorship of HBV see fn. 66.

It will be useful to consider these texts as contributing to and significantly constituting the “cumulative tradition” of Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇavism. That is to say, following Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1978: 156-7), these texts partake of that aspect of religious phenomena that can be viewed by anyone, including outsiders to a tradition, as crucial contributors to the continuity of the tradition over time. The aim of this chapter will be to show how *vidhi* and *rāga*, the two conceptions interwoven throughout these texts, situate formal worship of images (*arcanam*) as both a means of expressing and confirming cosmic/divine order and a process of individual and community transformation. Although these texts are all essentially regarded as *smṛti*, in contrast to the higher *śruti* classification of revelation enjoyed by the Vedic Saṁhitās, they nevertheless constitute for Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas the body of foundational expressive truth that holds the authority of revelation.

As already noted in the Introduction, *vidhi* and *rāga* are usefully viewed as conceptual axes running perpendicular to each other in a field of activity, attitude, and motivation. In this chapter we will see several ways the texts in question “plot” specific instances of devotional practice on this map of the *bhakti* logos, as part of the background for considering Kṛṣṇa’s move west.

What will emerge is that the texts in question serve as *patterns* for shaping the space in which Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* might thrive in the daily lives of practitioners. As architects and builders of ancient Indian temples drew from a vocabulary of forms and relationships, “varying design to create visual interest, and occasionally introducing striking innovations” to construct particular temples (Davis 2002: 31), so Kṛṣṇa *bhaktas* (at various levels of authority and influence) drew and continue to draw from conceptual and ritual vocabularies to constitute particular sets of worship practices. The texts are therefore *provisional* in two senses of the term: They provide the broad normative framework for thinking and acting devotionally, and they aim to frame the immediate context of practice with the orientation of consciousness meant to eventually become permanently internalised in the practitioner. Thus they provide elements of grammar, syntax, and poetics upon which worship practice is built and sustained.

It will also be useful to view these texts more specifically in terms of formal ritual structures. As also mentioned in the Introduction, I will draw on Roy Rappaport’s notion of ritual’s three-dimensionality as another analytic device, paying attention to the “height” of hierarchical elements, the “breadth” of meanings and discourse about

meanings, and the “depth” of ritual continuity and sequence. This spatial (or space/time) analogy will serve to identify important features of these worship patterns, allowing us in subsequent chapters to consider the dynamics of changing patterns as the interplay of charisma and canon unfolds in time. As we shall see, a small number of “charismatic moments” (O’Dea: 298)—key narrative incidents in the BhP and CC—provide a rich complex of signification from which these patterns can be identified.

This chapter has two main sections. In the first section I will present important broad themes leading into our area of concentration from Vedic, Upaniṣadic, and pāñcarātric literature antecedent to our triangle of texts. In the second section I will discuss selected portions of the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Haribhaktivilāsa*, considering ways these texts interrelate discourse, ritual and narrative, especially in terms of the two threads of devotional cultivation, *vidhi* and *rāga*.

## 1.1 BHAKTI AS UPĀSANĀ: SOME EARLY THREADS OF WORSHIP

### 1.1.1 *Worship as Construction and Repair: Vedic Sacrifice*

Although we will be concentrating on texts of a much later period than the ritual and reflective texts of Vedic times, it is appropriate to consider these earlier texts as important forerunners of those works which are our main focus. This is so because the paradigmatic Vedic ritual (*yajña*) or sacrifice, and the paradigmatic meditative practice (*upāsanā*) will shape, at least metaphorically, much later understanding of worship.

Let us first consider the texts dealing with sacrifice. The notion that human beings realise their fundamental identity in relation to the divine and mundane realms in acts of worship finds extensive expression in the four Vedic Saṃhitās and in associated texts, the Brāhmaṇas. Sacrifice, the principal religious practice propounded in these texts, is a form of precision technology that places human actors at the centre of a universe made orderly by exacting observance of enjoined ritual action directed to divine beings. These divinities, the several Vedic gods, are themselves prototypical performers of sacrifice: “By means of the *yajña* the gods sacrificed to the *yajña*” (Mahony: 108).<sup>3</sup> The brahmins, or priests, as “human gods” (*manuṣya-devas*) (Mahony: 335) or counterparts to the gods, are held to be in some sense on a par with the be-

<sup>3</sup> *Atharvaveda* 7.5.1. Translation, William K. Mahony.

ings whom they worship. They are considered the exemplars of human society, which is thought to descend from the primordial ancestor “Manu,” the prototype of humanity in general, or *manu*—“the thinking one” (Mahony: 107).

While several scholars consider the central meaning of Vedic *yajña* to be the principle of reciprocal exchange (Witzel 2003: 77-78), others argue that *yajña* is *not* primarily a ritual of honorific gift-giving exchange between gods and humans. Rather, Vedic worship and the rituals surrounding worship are corrective and constructive, bringing about and maintaining the higher cosmic order which is found wanting in the natural created order (B.K. Smith 1998: 50), or bringing about the reintegration of a disintegrated order (Mahony: 107). As the knowers and chanters of Vedic mantras and as the executors of Vedic sacrifice, the brahmin priests are considered embodiments of the Veda (Holdrege 1996: 400-401) and extensions of the *r̥ṣis*, or poet-seers, who are said to have composed the Vedic hymns. As such the priests act on behalf of the householder-sacrificer who sponsors the rite, and by extension, for the whole of human society, as protectors and maintainers of universal order, an order consisting of complex interlinking structures defined and sustained within ritual. Through ritual action (*karman*) of which *yajña* is the ideal form, brahmins establish the delicate balance between *jāmi*, or excessive homogeneity, and *pṛthak*, or excessive differentiation (B.K. Smith 1998: 51-54), both conditions being destructive of fecundity. The result of properly performed *karman* is the reaffirmation of *ṛta*—the cosmic order, universal harmony, or “artfulness of being,”<sup>4</sup> by which personal, social, and cosmic well-being are maintained. Ritual action in accordance with *ṛta* amounts to a sort of performance, and indeed all human beings are accorded roles in the universal drama of struggle against unreality, falsehood, and nonbeing (Mahony: 107), the three opposites of truth.<sup>5</sup> All these themes are, for later worship tradition, metonymically carried and preserved through recitation of the famous *puṛuṣa-sūkta* hymn of the late Ṛgveda (10.90). This describes the cosmogonic sacrificial

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<sup>4</sup> *The Artful Universe*, 3. Mahony expounds on the richness of the term *ṛta*, summarising its meaning as “a principle of harmony in which all things move together smoothly and support each other in a fitting manner,” fn. 5, 235. The English words ‘rite,’ ‘ritual,’ and ‘art’ are all, he notes, etymologically traceable to the Indo-European *\*ar*, to which *ṛta* is related.

<sup>5</sup> Clooney (1993: 24-25) notes that in the later Pūrva Mīmāṃsā reflections on ritual and ritual texts, “truth,” along with other “competing measures of significance” such as the gods, the author of the texts, and the ordinary world, are all peripheral and contributory to the central event of sacrifice. Moreover, truth retains throughout these rituals and reflections on them a spatial and temporal identity: truth *occurs* at a specific location and time of properly performed ritual.

dismemberment of Puruṣa, the Cosmic Man, who later becomes associated with Prajāpati, the overarching deity of the Brāhmaṇa texts (B. K. Smith 1998: 54).

Hints of philosophic speculation in the Vedic Saṁhitās become more pronounced in their corollaries, the Brāhmaṇas, which hold considerable explication on the origin, purpose, and meaning of the rituals. Here, *dharma* replaces the Vedic *ṛta* as the fundamental principle of order (Brockington: 32-34). This explication was accompanied by a gradual shift in understanding of sacrifice, such that those performing the rituals are accorded greater importance in the ritual scheme as executors of the regulating and perpetuating functions of the sacrifice. In these texts one finds elements beginning to coalesce which will later inform developed Vaiṣṇavism, namely the equating of the *yajña* with Viṣṇu and with Prajāpati (37). The term *brahman* emerges as the power of the rituals to produce their effects (36), and along with hints of a doctrine of rebirth and individual immortality (Halbfass 1991: 291, quoting Farquhar), the Brāhmaṇas reflect on the ultimate basis of the ritually maintained cosmos (Brockington: 38). “Indeed,” J. L. Brockington suggests, “the Brāhmaṇas, for all their ritualism and formalism, are closer in spirit to the Upaniṣads than to the *R̥gveda* in so far as they emphasize the importance of knowledge, of a real understanding of the inner meaning of the matters discussed. Their elaborate debates on the ritual and its significance in a very real sense give rise to the cosmic and metaphysical speculations of the Upaniṣads” (38).<sup>6</sup>

Before proceeding to consider the Upaniṣadic reshaping of worship, we can briefly consider the “logos” of Vedic *yajña* in terms of Rappaport’s three dimensions of liturgical order, beginning with the vertical or hierarchical axis.<sup>7</sup> Atop this order of value and increasing abstraction lies the “ultimate sacred postulate” of *ṛta*, later known as *dharma*, to be replaced in Upaniṣadic speculations with *brahman*. Ranked

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<sup>6</sup> J. Gonda extends anticipation of Upaniṣadic thought even earlier, to the Vedic Saṁhitās: “Early Vedic religion is, if we examine it more closely, more than mere ritualism, and there are more links between this ‘ritualism’ and the leading ideas of the Upaniṣads and post-Vedic literature than some authorities are inclined to assume” (Gonda 1965: 197).

<sup>7</sup> A key term for Rappaport is “liturgical order,” which he defines as “a more or less *invariant* sequence of formal acts and utterances *encoded by someone other than the performer himself*” (Rappaport: 118, emphasis in original). He further notes that “liturgical orders are meta-orders, orders of orders binding together the natural, the cultural and the social, the individual and the group, the discursive and the non-discursive into coherent wholes” (346). His use of “order” plays on its several connotations (169), especially the “world-encompassing orders” he refers to as “Logos,” as understood in pre-Christian Greek usage, meaning “an all-encompassing rational order uniting nature, society, individual humans and divinity into ‘a great cosmos’ which is eternal, true, moral, and in some sense harmonious” (346-53).

next is the “cosmological axiom” that cosmic order (based on hierarchical classification of all beings and objects, visible and invisible) is established and maintained by means of the performance of *yajña*. Thirdly, the “specific rules” for performance of *yajña* are contained in the several Vedic and Brāhmaṇa texts and, equally or more importantly, in the memories and recitations of the brahmin priests. Lastly, the “formal indices of prevailing conditions” (social and environmental contingencies registered in or responded to in Vedic ritual performance) are viewed as natural states of imbalance, incompleteness, unreality, falseness, and non-being—all needing correction by correct performance of *yajña*.

On the *simultaneous* or *synchronic* axis of meaning in Vedic ritual order (what Rappaport calls “multivocal significata” [170]) are the varied participants, utensils, ingredients, spatial and temporal articulations, movements and incantations—all orchestrated toward the affirmation of multi-leveled *resemblances* supportive of the overall *constructive* aim of the sacrifice (B. K. Smith 1998: 46 and *passim*).<sup>8</sup> The third dimension, the temporal axis, is realised most immediately in the sequence of rites performed in a specific sacrifice (along with the properly pronounced appropriate incantations, sequences of articulated sounds), more extended in series of rites marking seasonal cycles, and most abstractly in the ongoing aims of perpetuation—of human and cosmic well-being.

This way of viewing the Vedic *yajña* might serve to mitigate the apparent disagreement on its central meaning. If exchange is identified with the semantic axis of breadth and cosmic balance is associated with the vertical axis of hierarchy, there is complementarity as both dimensions unfold in the sequentiality of ritual performance. In any case this disagreement might well be a descendent of much earlier reflections on *yajña*'s significance that unfolded as the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads, wherein ritual action and its meaning takes a turn “inward.”

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, arguing against prominent theories of meaninglessness of the Vedic sacrifice, places “resemblance” at “a philosophical center around which all Vedic thought resolves. He distinguishes *resemblance* from *identity*, commonly thought to be the determining principle of Vedic ritual (38-47). But, as we shall see, much Upaniṣadic speculation drifts strongly toward the search for and accomplishment of identity, especially and finally of *ātman* with *brahman*.

### I.1.2 Worship as Meditation: The Upaniṣadic Turn Within

An important transition from the Brāhmaṇas to the Upaniṣads in terms of changing worship concepts is afforded by the Āraṇyakas, or “forest books,” which are concluding portions to Brāhmaṇa texts. Here one finds the beginnings of an “internalisation of the sacrifice,” a replacement of external formal offerings with internal mental or physiological “offerings” (Brockington: 41).<sup>9</sup> This shift from external ritual to internal contemplation as sacrifice finds its logical conclusion in the radical reorientation toward soteriological pursuit which characterises the Upaniṣads. While largely affirming the aims of Vedic sacrifice (cosmic order and abundance), these become viewed as inferior to the higher pursuit of world-transcendence (*mokṣa*). A subversive undercurrent of individualism emerges, based on the notion that a person’s true self is the pre-existing inner self, not the empirical self of action that seeks to construct transcendence (Clooney 1990: 199-200). From this perspective, acts and vows of renunciation, such as *brahmacarya* and *sannyāsa*, become acts of sacrifice (B. K. Smith 1998: 207), and the communal or familial context of sacrifice becomes challenged by an extra-societal trajectory of individuals seeking their own liberation. The drama of sacrifice turns from the dangers and uncertainties of ritual performance for instatement or reinstatement of cosmic equilibrium (Mahony: 125-36)<sup>10</sup> to the dramatic struggle of the individual meditator overcoming sensory passions and mental distractions in order to gain knowledge of *brahman*. For this purpose the Upaniṣads offer several techniques of worship, *upāsanā*, that take the form of meditative exercises aimed at realising the underlying principle of Being, *brahman*, and one’s own atemporal identity with *brahman* as *ātman*. These techniques, or *brahmavidyās* (as they will later come to be known), largely consist of particular identifications, equivalences, or synechdochic reductions which, when adequately contemplated, yield the unmediated joyfulness of *brahman* realisation. Such psycho-visual reductionism differed fundamentally from Vedic ritualism in that the latter was concerned with resemblances rather than absolute identities.

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<sup>9</sup> “Internalisation of the sacrifice” parallels a theme which becomes prominent in the tantric traditions, in which later Vaiṣṇavism will partake, namely that the human body is conceived as a microcosm of the universe. A thorough examination of tantric thought (except for a brief look at Pāñcarātra) in relation to Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship, important as it is, must be kept for a future study.

<sup>10</sup> B.K. Smith also discusses the perils of sacrifice in regard to the ascent to heaven (104-12).

This Upaniṣadic shift to an emphasis on contemplation is as much text-oriented as the Vedic sacrifices. But rather than following injunctions prescribing ritual actions, the practitioner of the *brahmavidyās* attends to textual directions for mental contemplative exercises, often incorporating Vedic sacrificial imagery which celebrates the Vedic texts. One well-known example of this type of exercise is the Madhu Vidyā of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, a “liturgical order” which invites the aspirant to equate the sun with the “honey of the gods” produced by the “incubation” of the Vedic Saṁhitā hymns, which are the “essences” from which truth springs forth.<sup>11</sup> The truth to be thus had would seem to be inaccessible by the ordinary means of Vedic sacrifice (itself extraordinary in comparison to non-ritual activity). Yet it would be an over-simplification to say that Upaniṣadic meditation represents an other-worldly ethos in contrast to a Vedic sacrificial this-worldliness. Still, a polarity of sorts does emerge that we can map onto our three-fold liturgical scheme, such that one can see how Upaniṣadic meditation aims to go beyond liturgy. By reducing all objects and concepts, including the self (all synchronous meanings), to the one aim of liberation in *brahman* (the ultimate sacred postulate), the temporal dimension of ritual collapses (or expands infinitely) to eternal *inaction*, an existence beyond all rites.<sup>12</sup>

Surely such an aim is remote from our object of study, the Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇava worship cult, as is the rigid formalism of Vedic sacrificial technology. Nevertheless the pan-Indian spirit of incorporation, wherein preceding texts and ideas are accommodated in later formulations, is fully operative in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition. Thus the *bhakti* logos of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship will represent in varying ways these themes of ritual action and meditation increasingly in terms of emotion directed toward a singular supreme God (albeit with expansions), rendered audible and visible through incantation (*mantra*) and image (*mūrti*). As we shall see, it will also accommodate the polarity of values represented by social convention (typified by religious domestic life sustained by *yajña*) and indifference to social convention (typified by the ascetic life sustained by meditation).

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<sup>11</sup> Chāndogya Up. 3.1.1-3.5.4, trans. Olivelle.

<sup>12</sup> If Upaniṣadic speculation seems in some respects to subvert the Vedic sacrifice, it could be seen to do so as a process of religious *renewal* and *reform*. These themes as processes of religious change will receive explicit attention in chapter three, but we can note their presence from early times. Although not expounded in this study, suffice to note that an interesting analysis of the dynamics of religious change is offered by Rappaport in what he calls the “cybernetics of the holy” (429-31) in terms of ritual participation and authority.

### 1.1.3 Vedic Versus Āgamic Systems of Worship: From Yajña to Pūjā

A major textual source of all Vaiṣṇava image worship practices up to the present day is the collection of texts known as Vaiṣṇava Saṁhitās, also known as Pāñcarātra Āgamas or simply Pāñcarātra (Beck: 173).<sup>13</sup> Traditionally numbering 108 Saṁhitās (Schrader: 4), the approximately sixty to seventy extant texts offer a system of worship in marked contrast to either Vedic or Upaniṣadic styles.<sup>14</sup> Some common features of the pāñcarātric texts are a clear focus on the worship of Viṣṇu, also called Nārāyaṇa, with the purpose of attaining some form of union or communion with him (or attaining his eternal association and residence in his transcendent abode); explication of *vyūha*-theology of divine and cosmic expansion through *vyūhas*, literally “formations”; and an emphasis on recitation of and meditation on sacred utterances (*mantras*) as the centre of *sādhana*, or disciplined practice upon receiving *dīkṣā*, initiation (Beck: 173-4; Gonda 1970: 49). Pāñcarātra literature has this last element in common with Śaiva Āgama; the same holds true for its relation to Śakta Tantra.<sup>15</sup> Sanjukta Gupta notes, “Pāñcarātra has a great deal in common with other Tantric sects, and this holds also for its attitude to *mantra*. Like the other sects, Pāñcarātra refers to its own scriptures as *Mantra-Śāstra* and regards them as teaching *mantras*, meditation on those *mantras*, and the ritual accompanying that meditation; the whole constituting the means (*sādhana*) to salvation (*mukti*)” (Gupta 1989: 228-9).

A further characteristic of Pāñcarātra, linked to its understanding of *mantra*, is the importance placed on Śakti, the power of Viṣṇu, identified as the divine Word—*vāk*, *nāda-brahman*, or *śabda-brahman* and personified as Viṣṇu’s consort Lakṣmī or

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<sup>13</sup> Beck cites H. Daniel Smith, “The ‘Three Gems’ of the Pāñcarātrāgama Canon—An Appraisal.” *Vimarśa* 1, no. 1 (1972): 45-51.

<sup>14</sup> Schrader’s estimate of ca. thirty extant texts has been superceded. Conversation with M. Narasimhachary, November 2001. (Prof. Narasimhachary was the guide of Daniel Smith, well-known scholar on Pāñcarātra, in his initial tour of south India to locate Pāñcarātric texts.)

<sup>15</sup> Harvey Alper notes, “In dealing with the literature of the Pāñcarātra—and the same point holds true for virtually all Indian religious traditions: Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Śakta, or even ‘non-Hindu’—one should not fall into the trap of making hard and fast sectarian distinctions. Distinctions are there, but they are regional, communal, familial, and preceptorial” (Alper: 367). Alexis Sanderson suggests, based on detailed arguments, that three of the early Pāñcarātric texts (the *Jayākhya*, *Sāttvata*, and *Pauṣkara Saṁhitās*) were written under the influence of Tantric Śaiva models. He also shows evidence of text-flows in the other direction (Sanderson: 2003).

Śrī. As the energy of Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī becomes the essential via medium between the *sādhaka*, or practitioner, and the supreme God, Viṣṇu. As such she becomes the conveyor of divine grace, theologically crucial for the flourishing of the Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* movement and particularly important later as a theoretical basis for the worship of Rādhā together with Kṛṣṇa in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition.<sup>16</sup>

Between earlier and later pāñcarātric texts a difference in attitude toward mantra is discernible. In earlier Pāñcarātra texts the faithful utterance of the mantra received from one's *guru* was understood largely as a means to gain power and identity with the referent deity of the mantra. The emphasis was on personal effort and meditation, following Upaniṣadic/yogic self-disciplinary paradigms. In the later formulations mantras become embodiments of God's favour, means of attaining communion with God by his grace, more an emotional than a meditative experience. The earlier and later conceptions were quite disparate, yet a reconciliation was found in the practice of pāñcarātric *upāsana*, or meditation combined with worship, in which equal importance was placed on the use of mantra and the worship of a physical image. The relation between mantra, or potent incantation, and the divinity it designates came to be understood increasingly in terms of *bhakti* in later Pāñcarātra literature and practice, wherein the mantra is a manifestation of the grace, or favour, of God (*kṛpā, anugraha*) (Gupta 1989: 231). Since mantras were associated with images that were visible and located, and hence widely accessible, divine grace came to be associated with a broadened worship franchise.

This new emphasis on emotion and grace in Pāñcarātra reflects the *bhakti* trend evident in the Epic literature, especially the *Mahābhārata*, wherein the strongly devotional *Bhagavad-gītā* is found. It is beyond the scope of this study to trace in any detail the early development of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*.<sup>17</sup> Suffice to note here that an important component for the blending of ritual action and devotionism which will characterise later development in Vaiṣṇava image worship finds articulation in pāñcarātric lit-

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<sup>16</sup> See Gonda (1970: 59-61), on the important position of Lakṣmī in the Pāñcarātra system. "It is Lakṣmī, mythologically God's wife, and always intent on delivering, by her favour and compassion (*anugraha*), the incarnated souls out of the misery of mundane existence, who, identified with Viṣṇu's highest location or manifestation — is the highest goal of the devotees—whose souls are parts or rather 'contractions' of the Goddess." idem, 60.

<sup>17</sup> See G. Colas for an excellent overview of the development of Vaiṣṇavism, including a helpful discussion on the relationship between Pāñcarātras and Bhāgavatas as particular communities.

erature. Crucial to this development is the notion of grace, already appearing as early as 350 BCE in the *Śvetāśvatara* and *Kaṭha Upaniṣads* (Gupta 1986: 537).

Up to now we have briefly considered three genres of sacred texts—those dealing with Vedic sacrifice, meditation, and pāñcarātric worship—more or less as isolated groups of “threads” which will eventually be woven into the fabric of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship. But now, with an ascending pāñcarātric tradition we encounter a clash of interests between its followers and the school of Vedāntic interpretation of Upaniṣadic literature which will prompt apologetic interpretative writing by defenders of the exclusive worship of Viṣṇu. In terms of the hierarchical dimension of liturgical order, the discursive clash is between differing ultimate sacred postulates, between non-qualified (*nirguṇa*) *brahman* and qualified (*saguṇa*) *brahman* (Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa) as contenders for ultimacy.

#### *1.1.4 Pāñcarātra's Dialogue with Vedānta*

We move forward in time to the late tenth and early eleventh centuries when followers of Pāñcarātra begin defending their doctrines and worship practices against criticism of non-orthodoxy, or non-adherence to Vedic/Upaniṣadic canon.<sup>18</sup> What will later crystallize into the Śrīvaiṣṇava school of Viṣṇu worship was given a powerful doctrinal boost by Yāmūnācārya (10<sup>th</sup> c.) when he wrote his innovative defence of Pāñcarātra, the *Āgamaprāmānya*, as part of a process of integration and legitimisation. In arguing for the authority of Pāñcarātra this apologetical work is an important landmark in the expansion of Vaiṣṇava Vedāntic canon (van Buitenen: 2). How Yāmūna constructs his case need not detain us, except to note his emphasis on divine compassion for the sake of human comprehension. Yāmūna summarises:

*Bhagavān* (the Lord) who has faultless natural comprehension of the compendium of unlimited Veda (*akhila-veda-rāṣih*), seeing both cultured and simple devotees (bewildered) in the matter of concentration, meditation etc. from the many branches (of Veda) consisting of various injunctions, meanings, doctrines and mantras—out of compassion, by making its meaning easily comprehensible (*laghunā upāyena*) he sum-

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<sup>18</sup> The *Brahmasūtras* 2.2.42-45 were construed by Śāṅkara as condemning the Pāñcarātra school, hence Yāmūna, among other issues, mounts his defense by reinterpreting these Sūtras such that they would seem favorable to it. I have written an unpublished essay on this topic, “Canons in Conflict: Unzipping Brahmasūtras II.ii.42-45” (1997). See also Neevel (1977).

marised it and desired to teach it. In this matter there is nothing unreasonable (in regard to accusations made previously)(van Buitenen, 75).<sup>19</sup>

By contextualising Pāñcarātra as an expedient divine response to the incomprehensibility of the Veda, Yāmuna portrays Bhagavān as the preeminent interpreter of scripture. Also, by identifying divine compassion as the motivation for Pāñcarātra becoming available he draws attention to relational feeling as the root of the system. Yet in a somewhat pluralistic spirit Yāmuna also defends Pāñcarātra as an *optional* (*vikalpa*) system compatible with Vedānta because not opposed to it.

Yāmuna's apologetic was largely intended to fuse the pāñcarātric system of worship with the Vedāntic system of philosophy. His integrative efforts were further pursued by his successors.<sup>20</sup> By countering the Advaita Vedāntic system of Śaṅkara (8<sup>th</sup> c.) with his Vaiṣṇavite Vedāntic system (designated Viśiṣṭhādvaita by later commentators) Rāmānuja (d. 1137) participated in and thereby accepted the Upaniṣadic discourse of which Vedāntic thought mainly consists. In doing so, he offered an important shift in the meaning of *bhakti* which is yet arguably true to the Upaniṣadic perspective, with its emphasis on meditation, and at the same time is markedly different from Śaṅkara's position. Śaṅkara saw *bhakti* as the attitude of dedication to the quest for the real self (*svātma-tattva*), as devotion to the task of attaining liberation, a provisionally necessary attitude not integral to the goal itself. For Śaṅkara *upāsana*, as meditation or worship on or toward an aspect of (subordinated) *saguna brahman*, was a provisional exercise with a tenuous connection to *bhakti*, itself a general emotive component to a process of going beyond emotion.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast, Rāmānuja specifically equated *bhakti* with *upāsana*, such that both involve intentional activation of memory and vision. Employing Upaniṣadic prooftexts, Rāmānuja emphasized that successful meditation involves *seeing*, and as

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<sup>19</sup> My translation, based on van Buitenen's.

<sup>20</sup> From the perspective of ritual, the link between Pāñcarātra and Śrīvaiṣṇavism is clearly apparent in the *Nityagrantha*, a work traditionally attributed to Rāmānuja. This describes morning rituals for the Śrīvaiṣṇava practitioner that are almost identical with those described in the 28<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Ahirbudhnya-samhitā*, with the important addition of meditations and visualisations reflecting Viśiṣṭhādvaitic teachings on *kaimkarya*, the attitude of service to the Lord as an end in itself, in contrast to the prototype Pāñcarātric text's ritual purposes of fulfilling various wishes—long life, victory, wealth, land, son, and liberation. A later Śrīvaiṣṇava work, the *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* of Venkaṭanātha, follows a similar pattern (Rostelli: 2003b).

<sup>21</sup> I am indebted to Joseph O'Connell for his corrective comments on Śaṅkara's understanding of *bhakti* over against Krishna Sharma's presentation in her problematic revisionist critique of outdated academic formulations of *bhakti* (Sharma: 148-150).

such, direct perception (*pratyakṣatāpatti*) which reaches through and beyond the texts which enjoin and describe the process of meditation (Clooney 1998: 117-18). Whatever Rāmānuja considered the proper object of vision or direct perception,<sup>22</sup> his immediate successors elaborated on this theme with reference to the works of the earlier devotional Tamil poetry of the Ālvārs, especially on the *Tiruvāymoli* of Śatakopān (8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> c.?). The *Tiruvāymoli* is unequivocal in repeatedly lauding Viṣṇu as the object of *upāsana*, and the post-Rāmānuja commentators insisted that the work demonstrates, by its central placement of *upāsana* toward Viṣṇu, their conviction that nothing less than this is adequate for salvation.<sup>23</sup>

Worship, *upāsana*, had been conceived by Śaṅkara as a meditative therapeutic process which brings spiritual health as its result, consisting of self-knowledge which is the original, “healthy” condition of identity with *brahman*.<sup>24</sup> Now, from Rāmānuja’s equation of *bhakti* with *upāsana* elaborated on by later Śrīvaiṣṇavas, worship would still be understood in terms of meditation leading to self-knowledge, but it became conceived more as “textual *bhakti*” (Clooney 1998: 132), wherein Viṣṇu, the Lord, is its only true object and goal. “[T]he fruit of *upāsana* is clear knowledge about oneself and about the Lord; the knower becomes totally dedicated to the object of *upāsana*, the Lord, and so remains at his feet, in close union with him, in a life of service” (Clooney 1998: 134). These Śrīvaiṣṇava elucidations on *bhakti* hark back to a relatively conservative “Upaniṣadic” orientation found also in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, wherein *bhakti* involves personal effort in cultivation of meditation and *jñāna*, which Rāmānuja specified as a practice open to the three higher classes—

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<sup>22</sup> Clooney notes that Rāmānuja gives no indication of either the object of vision (presumably Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa) or what one is to see upon attaining the vision (1998: 137 fn. 6).

<sup>23</sup> Clooney notes that for these commentators, “*Tiruvāymoli* exemplifies the act of *upāsana* in process, as meditation proceeds toward full *darśana* [vision], as well as the ālvār’s struggle to get beyond the limits of *upāsana* to an intuition that is not merely like *darśana*, but *darśana* as actual perception—he is always seeking to get beyond *mānasa anubhāva* [mental experience] to a direct perception of the Lord—and in that process learns experientially how it is that he cannot” (1998: 122-23).

<sup>24</sup> The Vedic sacrificial theme of well-being is taken up by followers of Śaṅkara, who saw the Upaniṣads as pointing to a “therapeutic” conception of worship, in that practices of meditation which lead to knowledge of the self bring about an original, “natural” state comparable to the natural state of bodily health (Halbfass 1991: 251-52). Conceiving worship in this light, it is comparable with that aspect of Vedic ritualism which was concerned with cosmic regeneration and repair; conversely, it contrasts with that aspect of Vedic ritualism which was oriented toward cosmic construction, as the creation of something previously non-existent or disordered. The contrast of Upaniṣadic meditation with ritualistic construction is highlighted by the Advaita Vedāntins to emphasize their claim that the Upaniṣads supersede the Vedic Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas.

brahmins, kṣatriyas and vaiśyas.<sup>25</sup> As Thomas Hopkins notes while discussing the *Bhagavad-gītā* (a text which is held in high esteem by Śrīvaiṣṇavas), “In most cases, when the *Gītā* describes *bhakti* in detail it turns out to be not much different from the Upāsanā or constant meditation of the Upaniṣads; it is more an expression of reverence or awe than of open-hearted love, more philosophical than emotional” (Hopkins 1998: 7).

And yet there is a new context of *bhakti* for the Śrīvaiṣṇavas, namely the more emotional devotionalism of the Ālvārs, which the commentators are at pains to make acceptable to a brahmin orthodoxy attuned to Vedāntic exegesis of the Upaniṣads (Hopkins 1998: 9-10). In contrast to both the ritualism of the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas and the meditational emphasis of the Upaniṣads and Vedānta, the new devotionalism of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas puts clear emphasis on Viṣṇu as the object of worship, to be worshipped with an attitude of intensity which goes far beyond that of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. This new intensity was identified especially with an alternative to *bhakti*, namely *prapatti*, also called *śaraṇāpatti* or *śaraṇāgati*. Whereas the practice of *bhakti* was reserved for the three higher *varṇas*, *prapatti* was available to anyone, in recognition of the Lord’s boundless compassion and the bound soul’s ultimate helplessness in becoming free from bondage on its own (Chari 1997: 131-33). As we shall see in chapter three, *śaraṇāgati* becomes a significant notion in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism as well.

As in the *Gītā*, in the new context of intensified *bhakti* the fruits of one’s worship practices now are understood to be granted exclusively by the Lord, as an act of his grace, and the substance of the Lord’s grace is that one is brought nearer to him, such that one can render him eternal service. In effect, the identification of Viṣṇu as *brahman* in an ultimate sense situates the worship of Viṣṇu as the ultimate sacred postulate for Vaiṣṇavas. Rather than collapsing time into eternity, this serves to *expand* eternity into unconditional opportunity for such worship. This understanding becomes a characteristic of Indian theism generally, including Vaiṣṇavism: All wor-

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<sup>25</sup> See S.M.S. Chari’s discussion on intellectual and emotional aspects of *bhakti* in Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, and his delineation of four phases thereof, namely “(1) *bhakti*, or loving devotion to god (*sic*); (2) *para-bhakti* or perfected devotion causing mental perception of God; (3) *para-jñāna* or occasional clear glimpses of God followed with joy during communion with God and anguish during separation from Him; (4) *parama-bhakti* or the climax of *bhakti* leading to the direct, comprehensive, eternal communion with God” (1997: 155). Such analysis is apparently a post-Rāmānuja development.

ship brings one in devotional relationship to the Lord as the exclusive source of illumination and grace.<sup>26</sup>

A crucial way this expansion of the opportunity for worship is afforded is, of course, by the visible divine image, *arcā-mūrti* or *arcāvatāra*. Pillai Lokācārya, the thirteenth-century Śrīvaiṣṇava theologian, highlights the superior accessibility of divine grace in images by comparison with three of the four other “divine auspicious forms” (*divya maṅgala vigraha*) in terms of the accessibility of different sources of water:<sup>27</sup>

The Lord as an Inner Controller (*antaryāmitvam*) is like water deep down in the earth; the Emanation (*vyūha*) is like the sea of milk; incarnations and manifestations on earth (*vibhava*) are like rivers in flood, but incarnations as images (*arcāvatāras*) are like deep pools [that are easily accessible] (Narayanan 1996: 62, quoting *Śrī Vacanabhūṣaṇam Viyākkīyānam, sūtra* 39).

If increasing tangibility is a measure of more easily available grace, a related feature of grace is its concessional character: The recipient of grace may become so *despite* or even *because of* disqualifications either as a sacrificer or a meditator. The emphasis on divine grace in the *bhakti* logos increasingly differentiates it from the sacrificial and meditational logoi. Still, ritualism and meditation are never abandoned; rather they become conscripted into the service of devotionalism, a process that expands and proliferates in the purāṇic literature.

## 1.2. IMAGE AND WORSHIP IN THE CAITANYA VAIṢṆAVA CANON

### 1.2.1. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa: The Focal Point of the Canonical Picture*

The Purāṇas represent an important shift in worship practices, with a marked focus on physical images as objects of worship, especially as *located* in particular sacred places, usually *tīrthas* (lit: “crossings”). Temple worship, with its emphasis on *darśana* (vision, sight, but also insight) as an essential means of accessing the deity, thus becomes a major feature of the Indian worship landscape from early centuries of

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<sup>26</sup> As noted by John Carman, there are ambiguities in Rāmānuja’s doctrine of grace which eventually led to the Vadagalai/Tengalai split in Śrīvaiṣṇavism. An interesting study would be to see how their theological differences manifest in relation to temple ritual (Carman: 13-14).

<sup>27</sup> The other form not mentioned is the supreme (*para*) form, which is the eternal form of Viṣṇu in the transcendent realm Vaikuṅṭha.

the Common Era.<sup>28</sup> The visible deity, now housed in a palatial construction replicating the R̥gvedic cosmic Puruṣa (Cosmic Man)(Gonda 1970: 27), becomes accessible to a much broader social spectrum than the invisible recipients of *yajñic* oblations. That visual tangibility of divinity became important was underscored by an increasing acceptance of writing as a mode of preserving and conveying *śāstra* (sacred texts)—a reversal of the earlier attitude which spurned the writing of Veda—to the point that the physical book or manuscript becomes worshipable as a deity (Brown: 69, 81-83).<sup>29</sup> In particular, the *Bhāgavata Purāna* is extolled in the *Padma Purāna* as having been infused with Kṛṣṇa’s own energy (*tejas*), making it worshipable as the verbal image (*vāñ-mayī mūrtiḥ*) of himself. We now turn our attention to the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, considered by the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas to be the stainless (*amala-*) *Purāna* and indeed as the highest scriptural authority (Kapoor: 73).

Although the *Bhāgavata Purāna* is only peripherally concerned with image worship as formal practice,<sup>30</sup> it demands attention as foundational to Caitanya Vaiṣṇava worship tradition, with its focus on emotional Kṛṣṇa-centred *bhakti*.<sup>31</sup> As Paul Hacker noted and Friedhelm Hardy has confirmed (1983: 38-39), the *Bhāgavata Purāna* is the first known Sanskrit text to exemplify emotional *bhakti*. It is thus a key expression of a trend toward systemisation of the Tamil-writing Ālvārs (Hopkins

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<sup>28</sup> There is no evidence of temple worship in India during the period of Vedic sacrifice; however it is possible or even probable that worship centred around a sacred fire in homes was performed, a practice suggesting Indo-Iranian origins wherein offerings to a personal deity were offered through fire. Whereas most historians postulate a succession from *yajña* to *pūjā*, or worship of iconic images, an alternative view is offered by Natalia Lidova that both types of worship were practiced concurrently considering the presence, however scarce, of the word *pūjā* in the R̥g Veda, the Gṛhyasūtras, and in Chandogya Upaniṣad (Lidova: Ch. 3).

<sup>29</sup> Brown notes the purāṇic equivalence of book and image as *avatāra*: “The visible, verbal image, in the form of the book, is none other than an incarnation of God, parallel to the idea that an iconic image of God is also an incarnation (*arcāvatāra*) of the divine . . . We see here in the ‘Bhāgavata Māhātmya’ [of *Padma Purāna*] the complete transformation of the holy word from sound to image, from mantra to *mūrti*” (Brown: 82). We may also note an equivalence of sacred book and temple in India, where temples become profusely illustrated story-books of the sacred narratives found in the *Purānas*. See for example Dennis Hudson (125-135), on the eighth century C.E. Vaikuṅṭha Perumāl Temple and its sculptures based on the BhP.

<sup>30</sup> However, see Rajamani, Ch. 7, “Image Worship and Images in the *Bhāgavata Purāna*” for interesting correlations between forms of Viṣṇu described in the BhP. and images at specific temples in India.

<sup>31</sup> Hopkins notes (1994: 7), “The Caitanya movement in Bengal in particular drew heavily on the *Bhāgavata* for its theology and devotional practices, giving the text embodiment in a living tradition whose founder himself was considered an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa as well as a model devotee of the sort portrayed by the *Bhāgavata Purāna*.”

1998:10), generally held by scholars to have come to its present form in the ninth or early tenth century CE (Hopkins 1994: 7).<sup>32</sup> Like the poetry of the Ālvārs, the special feature of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is its focus on devotion for Kṛṣṇa as the cowherd sweetheart of the *gopīs*, or milkmaids of Vrindavan. Although this topic is particularly elaborated in the text's tenth (of twelve) books, throughout the *Purāṇa* the prevailing theme is the superiority of emotional *bhakti* ultimately aimed at Kṛṣṇa as the original form of the deity. How the *Bhāgavatam* presents the attitude, practices, and goal of worship is our concern, for which four selections from this lengthy text will be my focus.

### 1.2.1.1 Kapila-śikṣa: The Yogic Practice of Religious Seeing

I begin with an injunctive passage that echoes meditation procedures found in Upaniṣadic texts. As a compendium of Indian thought, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also offers a version of Sāṅkhya philosophy imbued with theistic character, contrasting with the non-theistic classical Sāṅkhya as known from the second century CE *Sāṅkhyakārikā* of Iśvarakṛṣṇa. In the BhP (3.28.12-35) Kapila instructs his mother Devahūti on Sāṅkhya, including in his account a meditative yoga practice involving visualisation of Viṣṇu's bodily form. Initially identified by his standard iconographic characteristics—having four arms, dressed in yellow cloth, sporting the Śrīvatsa mark on his chest—Viṣṇu's bodily features as separate objects of meditation for the yogin are described in some detail beginning with his feet.<sup>33</sup> The injunctive format of the passage is counterbalanced by rich description and promise of intense emotional reward. One is to meditate (*dhyayet*) for a long time (*ciram*) on each of the Lord's features with a deep devotional mood (*vipula-bhāvanayā*), eventually reaching a

<sup>32</sup> However, see Bryant (2002) for an overview of opinions on the BhP's date and his own argument for its final, complete version coming from the Gupta period (350-500 C.E.).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Vedāntadeśika's fourteenth century Sanskrit poem *Bhagavad-dhyānasopānam* ("The Ladder of Meditation on the Lord"), an *anubhāva* of the temple image Raṅganātha, verse 10: "So my mind touches the lotus feet of Raṅga's Lord, delights in his fine calves, clings / to his twin thighs and, slowly rising, reaches / the navel. // It stops for a while on his chest, then, after climbing his broad shoulders, / drinks the nectar of his lovely face before it rests at last / at the crown's flowery crest" (Translation: Steven P. Hopkins: 40). Hopkins notes that this particular verse is modeled after three sources: early *yoga* texts, the poetry of Tiruppanālvār, and the erotic poetry of Kālidāsa (especially his limb-by-limb description of Umā, Lord Śiva's future wife, in *Kumārasambhava* 1.32-49). An example of such meditation in reverse – from head to foot – can be found in the description of meditation on the Goddess, verses 42-91 of the *Saundaryalaharī*, attributed to Ādi-Śankara (See Sastri & Ayyangar).

point when, with melted heart (*dravat hr̥dayaḥ*) one experiences horripilation (*utpulaḥ*) from heightened joy (*pramodāt*) (BhP 3.28.31, 34). Notable in this passage is the contrast between the mildness of Viṣṇu's pleasing features and the agitation aroused in the *yogin* as a result of successful practise. The practitioner is "constantly afflicted by a stream of tears arising from intense longing" (*autkaṅṭhya-bāṣpa-kalayā muhur ardyamānaḥ*). Thus the image of quietude evinced by the rather inactive form of Viṣṇu (he stands, sits, or reclines on the lotus of the *yogin*'s heart, glances, and smiles, as Lakṣmī massages his feet) is contraposed by the emotionally overwhelmed *yogin*—hardly the state of unperturbed aloofness one expects from the Upaniṣadic meditator. Yet the description maintains continuity with the Upaniṣadic ideal of worldly detachment: By devotional meditation on the form of Viṣṇu within the heart, one's tie with worldly aims is disrupted, the mind having been "freed from the flow of material qualities" (*pratinivṛtta-guṇa-pravāhaḥ*) (BhP 3.28.35). More remotely perhaps, but still worth noting, the passage echoes the Ṛgvedic *puruṣa-sūkta* in describing a human-like figure and details about its limbs. Both passages describe a supreme divine being in highly iconic terms, while here the emphasis is equally on there being one who perceives, or gains *darśanam* (direct sight) of that being.

Significantly, Kapila directs his instructions to his mother, who, though presenting herself as of lesser qualification due to her gender, is the recipient of Kapila's instructions and thus legitimated by the *Bhāgavata* text as eligible to practice the rigors of yogic discipline. The *Bhāgavata* upholds a degree of social orthodoxy, as in the Seventh Book, in Nārada's descriptions of *varṇa* (class) and *āśrama* (stage of life) duties. But always the higher principle of devotion is propounded, wherein devotional qualification supersedes material disqualification. Thus, for example, Prahlāda, "although born in a demonic family" (BhP 7.9.8), is favoured before all the gods to offer prayers to the Nṛsimha (man-lion) *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. Still, aside from the Vraja setting in the Tenth Book wherein Kṛṣṇa's worshipers—the *gopas* and *gopīs*—are *vaiśyas* (the third *varṇa*),<sup>34</sup> the BhP primarily presents *kṣatriyas* or brahmins as exemplary worshipers or devotees of Viṣṇu.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> They are identified as Ābhīras, a cowherding tribe which may or may not technically be considered *vaiśya*.

<sup>35</sup> Notable exceptions are Nārada (in his previous life as the son of a maidservant) and Vidura, the śūdra half-brother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

In this brief BhP passage we encounter a telling prescription for ideal viewing (*darśana*) in a yogic/devotional context. The liturgical order's sequential dimension is determined by the form of the object of meditation, each limb or feature of Viṣṇu's form leading the meditator to the next higher limb while (in the semantic dimension) evoking various associations and emotions. In turn devotional emotion, bringing worldly detachment, asserts the hierarchical dimension's order: devotional viewing of Viṣṇu brings such results *because* Viṣṇu is supreme, in a cosmos ultimately ordered by devotional feeling.

#### 1.2.1.2 Generic Procedures: Worship as Vaidhī-Sādhana-Bhakti

Although the exemplary worshippers in the narrative portions of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* are mainly brahmins and kṣatriyas, the one chapter dedicated to the formal procedure of image worship assures its readers that worship is appropriate for all orders of society.<sup>36</sup> In chapter twenty-seven of the Eleventh Book Kṛṣṇa himself instructs his friend Uddhava on *ārādhanam* or *arcanam*—the sequential worship procedure one finds in greater detail in other texts, especially pāñcarātric literature. Interestingly, Kṛṣṇa begins his exposition by referring to the “innumerable Vedic prescriptions” (*na hy anto 'nanta-pārasya karma-kāṇḍasya ca*) which he will summarise (*Bhāg.* 11.27.6), with the term *karma-kāṇḍa* alluding to the sacrificial character of the Veda. In the catholic spirit of the BhP, he then offers his readers a choice of method—*vaidikaḥ*, *tāntrikaḥ*, and *miśraḥ* (Vedic, tantric, or mixed Vedic/tantric) for performing worship (verse 7), underscoring perhaps the non-sectarian, or at least pan-Vaiṣṇava, attitude of the *Bhāgavata* and indicating that his description will be a generic or composite one. But then he goes on to mention the necessity of gaining *dvijatvam*, or “twice-born status” (membership in one of the three higher *varṇas*) as a prerequisite of image worship which, unless one takes *dvijatvam* as a possibility open to the lower orders through purification and initiation (and not exclusively by birth), would seem to be in opposition to Uddhava's previous inclusion of women and *śūdras* (*strī-śūdrānām*) as potential participants in image worship. Further ambiguity in the matter of *adhikāra*, or qualification for worship, is suggested by Kṛṣṇa's recommendation to worship with the Vedic *sam̐dhi* rites (worship at dawn and dusk,

<sup>36</sup> “Image” in this context includes both iconic and aniconic objects of worship, since the chapter mentions worship of the deity in the form of fire, water, the sun, or an image traced on the ground.

especially chanting the Vedic *gāyatrī-mantra*) (verse 11); by his recommendation to chant various Vedic hymns during the worship (verse 31); and by his recommendation to conclude the worship with a *homa*, or fire sacrifice (verse 36-41), something normally done only by “twice-born” males. As we shall see, the matter of *adhikāra* for the worship of images will be an important issue in the development of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism into a modern missionizing tradition.

As the most detailed description of worship procedures therein, BhP 11.27 can be seen as an overview of more technically detailed procedures found in works such as the *Haribhaktivilāsa* or other pāñcarātric and purāṇic literature. It can also be seen as an elaboration on the minimal instructions for worship procedure found in *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is more concerned with establishing the ultimate sacred postulate of Kṛṣṇa devotion than with specific rules for application. And although rules are delineated, they are of a rather generic sort that suggests considerable flexibility that fits with the ambiguity on the level of cosmological axioms. In any case, the overall character of this description of worship seems to anticipate what the later Caitanyaite commentators will designate as *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti* (or as *vaidhī-bhakti-sādhana*), the regular or routine practice of devotional worship according to scriptural prescription. That is to say, ritual correctness by which all desired objectives (*abhīpsitam siddhim*) will be rewarded has its place in the BhP, but as *sādhana* it serves finally one purpose only, the attainment of Kṛṣṇa (*mām eva . . . vindati*) (BhP 11.27.49, 53).

### 1.2.1.3 Govardhana-līlā: God as Worshipper

We now turn from ritual prescription to narrative, the BhP’s dominant style. In the Tenth Book one encounters Kṛṣṇa displaying his most intimate *līlās*, or divine sports, in his home village of Vrindavan and the greater Vraja area. Less the preceptor as in *Bhagavad-gītā* or in the *Uddhava-sandēśa* (instructions to Uddhava in the Eleventh Book), Kṛṣṇa is more the divine Actor performing and having exchanges among his close associates. The devotion of these direct associates elevates them beyond the formalities of reverential worship to dramatic roles featuring moods of intimate servitude, friendship, filial love and conjugal love. Indeed, in one episode, his

childhood Govardhana-lilā (BhP 10.24-25),<sup>37</sup> Kṛṣṇa parodies the entire process of formal worship offered to the Vedic gods (*devatās*), convincing the elders of Vraja (by quasi-Pūrva-mīmāṃsa argumentation) that the worship they had traditionally rendered to the storm god Indra should rather be proffered to Mount Govardhana and the cows.<sup>38</sup> Child Kṛṣṇa becomes the exemplary worshipper of himself expanded in a giant form (*bṛhad-vapuh*, BhP 10.24.35) as Govardhana, provoking Indra's wrath in the form of torrential rain in order to demonstrate his own charismatic/heroic superiority as the Lifter of Govardhana. Making the mountain function as an umbrella (and temporary temple) for his devotees, the Vraja residents, Kṛṣṇa facilitates uninterrupted *darśanam* of his divine form for seven days and nights until an embarrassed and chastened Indra concedes defeat. The episode concludes with Indra offering Kṛṣṇa prayers of contrition. Finally Kṛṣṇa is affused, or ritually doused (*abhiṣeka*) with milk from a celestial milch cow.<sup>39</sup>

This parody and reversal of worship roles revalorizes the Vedic cosmic order in such a way that the ritual universe is effectively reduced in size from the vastness of the grand Vedic pantheon of gods to the familiar proportions of a cowherd village.<sup>40</sup> In effect, it is a narrative account of the subordination of Vedic *dharma* to Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*, a process of religious renewal instigated by Kṛṣṇa, the source of divine charisma. In this account, Govardhana evokes the sense of simplicity and familiarity of village life in contrast with the sophisticated and strange city life of nearby Mathura. As we shall see later in more detail, for Caitanyaites the village setting marks the dismissal of *aiśvarya*, the sense of power and grandeur which usually accompanies formal worship. With *aiśvarya* absent, there is space for the intimacy and immediacy of *mādhurya*, the sweetness of emotional devotion (*bhāva-* and *prema-bhakti*) which

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<sup>37</sup> Govardhana-lilā, notes Hardy, was derived from the earlier *Harivaṃśa*, and both *Brahma-* and *Viṣṇu-Purāṇas*, and evidences “well-known antagonism between archaic rituals and Kṛṣṇa-worship” (Hardy 1983: 31, 93, 499-500).

<sup>38</sup> Pūrva-mīmāṃsa, the first of the classical six orthodox *darśanas*, or philosophical “views,” is characterised by its rigorous upholding of the Vedic sacrificial practice, in contrast to Uttara-mīmāṃsa (or Vedānta), which privileges inquiry into the nature of *brahman* over Vedic ritual.

<sup>39</sup> See Ferro-Luzzi, 113-121, on the common Indian motif of images being bathed by cows. *Abhiṣeka* is a rite of royal consecration, or of the bestowal of authority such as that of priesthood (Davis 1997:36), with parallels found in a wide range of cultures.

<sup>40</sup> One can see this village setting as indicative of an historical possibility or probability—that worship practices in India have been sustained largely in folk religion (Hardy 1983: 29-36).

Caitanya Vaiṣṇava theologians claim is the goal of *sādhana* (the realised truth of cultivation) and the highest form of religio-aesthetic experience.<sup>41</sup>

In the BhP's Govardhana narration "sweetness" is further concretized as food, especially sweets and milk products, as the central medium of ritual offering to Govardhana, now identified with Kṛṣṇa himself as his form in stone. That all the Vraja residents offer edibles that are consumed by this giant form of Kṛṣṇa signals wider worship participation. Yet this is not about the erasure of social hierarchy: all are expected to perform their caste-determined duties (BhP 10.24.18-21), and brahmin priests are honoured and invited to show their expertise in ritual performance and the chanting of Vedic mantras (BhP 10.24.25, 27).

#### 1.2.1.4 Rāsa-līlā: The Full Enactment of Worship

Admitting a new metaphor into our discussion, I turn to what Graham Schweig has called the "focal point" of the "picture" of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which is

surrounded by a rich 'frame' of epic, Vedic, Upaniṣadic, and other literature, all of which support the *Bhāgavata*. The Rāsa-līlā, which is considered by the Caitanya tradition to be the *līlā* of all *līlās*, can easily be designated as the canonical focal point, found within the picture of the *Bhāgavata*, understood by the tradition as the *śāstra* among all other *śāstras*" (Schweig 1998: 39).

Why the Rāsa-līlā is the focal point of the *Bhāgavata* becomes clear when we recognise the centrality of *mādhurya* in the religio-aesthetic scheme of Caitanyaite theology and *rasa*-theory. The Rāsa-līlā-*pañcādhyāya*, or five chapters of the tenth book of the BhP (Chs. 29-33), which elaborates on similar contents in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (Hardy 1983: 497-99), tells the story of Kṛṣṇa's clandestine sylvan meeting and dancing with the *gopīs* of Vraja. As the focal point of Caitanyaite reflection on devotion to Kṛṣṇa, this excerpt presents a picture of romantic love which is taken by practitioners to present the ultimate in devotional reciprocation between Kṛṣṇa and his most intimate devotees or associates. As we shall see in the next chapter, the daily temple worship of Kṛṣṇa is conceived as enacting his daily activities in Vraja, culminating in his meeting with the *gopīs*. It is also this episode, thought by modern

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<sup>41</sup> Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (1542) and Jīva Gosvāmī's slightly later *Bhakti-sandarbhā* and *Prīti-sandarbhā* elaborate extensively on the goal (*prayojana*) of devotional practice (*abhidheya*). These themes are further treated by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja in his CC.

critics to give divine license to immoral behaviour, that calls for apologetic response by nineteenth century defenders of the faith, as we shall see in chapter three.

Caitanyaitees read the *Rāsa-līlā-pañcādhyāya* as an account of the perfect enactment of worship leading to the highest expression of *bhakti*. Yet it proceeds with dramatic tension through stages of role reversal, uncertainty and divine pedagogy, culminating in the Rasa-dance as a grand, cosmic celebration of love. We may consider briefly these stages.

First, the *gopīs* are drawn irresistably by the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute to the forest to meet him, *renouncing* without hesitation whatever routine domestic occupations they were engaged in (*Bhāg.* 10.29.4-8). Next, encountering Kṛṣṇa, he *tests* their determination to worship him, suggesting they return home (as a *guru* might test a prospective disciple's resolve, initially sending her or him away) (10.29.18-28). Third, having accepted the *gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa soon disappears from their midst, having perceived pride in their hearts and wishing to *correct* their immature attitude (10.29.47-48). Fourth, the *gopīs*, while searching for Kṛṣṇa, experience intensified, *purifying feelings of separation (viraha)*, in the course of which they adduce that Kṛṣṇa is with one particular *gopī* who is his perfect worshipper (*anayārādhito nūnam*) (10.30.1-44). Fifth, Kṛṣṇa, the Object of worship, *gives audience*: there are words of reconciliation, followed by *worship* of Kṛṣṇa on a throne as the "exclusive reservoir of beauty" (10.32.2-14). Sixth, Kṛṣṇa, still acting as the *gopīs'* guru, *discourses* on the exalted nature of selfless love, confessing his own inability to adequately reciprocate the love of the *gopīs*, his disciples (10.32.17-22). Finally, the *festivity* of the Rasa-dance is enacted, Kṛṣṇa demonstrating his identity as the ultimate Actor by perfectly reciprocating the devotional love of the *gopīs* and the entire universe (10.33.1-26).

There is poignancy in the *gopīs'* story in that they, the most exemplary worshippers, ultimately suffer abandonment when later Kṛṣṇa departs from Vrindavan for Mathura. Having already been deprived of Kṛṣṇa's company once during their meeting for the Rasa-dance, and having daily suffered the pangs of separation from him as he roamed Vraja with his cowherd friends, the Vraja *gopīs* endure permanent separation from their object of devotion by constant remembrance and unrelieved longing. Deprived of their Beloved the *gopīs* are paradoxically united with him through the unflagging intensity of their devotional feelings. In terms of the hierarchical axis of liturgical order, the *gopīs* (and especially the unnamed favourite *gopī*, later identified as Rādhā) blur structural distinctions as they unite with Kṛṣṇa to un-

fold a universe governed by devotional feeling (Klostermaier: 113; Matchet, quoting M. Biardeau, 2003: 138). In terms of the *vidhi/rāga* map, the *gopīs* are within the quadrant constituted of low *vidhi* (having abandoned societal rules to meet Kṛṣṇa) and high *rāga* (by virtue of the intensity and selflessness of their love). Despite their low-*vidhi* location, the *gopīs* are honoured in the Caitanya tradition as the most exalted of devotees and the best of Kṛṣṇa’s worshippers, ontologically on par with him and hence prepared to accept all adverse consequences for their behaviour, including social ostracism.

As a script for liturgical order, semantically the *Rāsa-līlā-pancādhyāya* is about emotional *bhakti* par excellence, now removed from the socially constrained village to the dangerous and exciting forest. In Caitanya Vaiṣṇava religio-aesthetic theory, it demonstrates the height of *mādhurya-rasa* (also referred to as *ṣṛṅgāra-rasa*), the attitude of conjugal love, and as such it represents complete freedom from the need for practice and discipline. And yet even here there are motifs reminiscent of the more formal, ritual- or meditation-oriented forms of religious activity and discourse. The *gopīs* are, for example, compared to saintly persons who meditate, and to *yogins* (*Bhāg.* 10.31.7-8); the guru-disciple relationship of the Upaniṣads is echoed (or parodied); there are Vedāntic references (10.29.14); and there is discourse on the nature of *dharma* (10.29.24, 32). In short, for the abandonment of *vidhi* to attain the height of *rāga* there is still *vidhi*, or set procedure.

Even while these chapters convey a mood of worship-as-emotional-drama, they strive to anchor the process of worship in the tradition reaching back to the Vedas and Upaniṣads. Although, as the paradigmatic “charismatic moment” of the BhP, these chapters mark a sort of break with tradition and the restraints of mundane propriety (indicated by the retreat to the forest), they also celebrate the “institution” of devotional community perfectly manifest as the community of the Rāsa-dance.

### 1.2.2 Caitanya-caritāmṛta: Sequel to the Bhāgavata Purāna

The *Bhāgavata Purāna* is important and even essential to Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition and hence to image worship, but it cannot be claimed exclusively by the Caitanyaites as their own (Matchett 2003: 141). For a distinctively Caitanya Vaiṣṇava text bearing on our topic we turn to Kṛṣṇadāsa’s *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (CC), the

early seventeenth century Bengali biography of Caitanya.<sup>42</sup> Indeed the CC, as the culmination of a century of theological reflection over the identity of Caitanya, claims recognition as “the single most important text within the [Caitanya] biographical tradition” (Stewart 1985: 355).<sup>43</sup> One might question my neglect of writings by the Vrindavan six Gosvāmīs other than *Haribhaktivilāsa*, especially Rūpa’s *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*,<sup>44</sup> but for the purposes of this study, their writings are well represented within the CC. Tony Stewart notes,

The influence of [the Vrindavan Gosvāmīs] in the CC cannot be underestimated, for their writings and opinions are marshalled on numerous occasions in both the theological and narrative portions of the text. It is the combined weight of these industrious devotees that infuses Kṛṣṇadāsa’s writing with an authority difficult to dismiss. When Kṛṣṇadāsa writes, the entire Gauḍīya community of Vrindavan is writing (Stewart 1985: 357).

Including quotations from works of the six Gosvāmīs, Kṛṣṇadāsa draws on over seventy-five Sanskrit texts in 1011 citations scattered through the entire work of some 11,535 verses (Stewart 1985: 357-8). While the CC is essentially a narrative of Caitanya’s life, somewhat like the other works we are discussing it also acts as a compendium of texts stretching back long before Caitanya’s advent, now enlisted to proclaim the glories of the “great master” (Mahāprabhu) Caitanya, as the dual descent of Kṛṣṇa and his divine consort, Rādhā. As a sequel to the BhP, the CC was intended to enable fuller comprehension of that difficult work, much as Pāñcarātra was thought to provide concessionary comprehension of Vedic truth. As a work in Bengali language, it was meant to reach a much wider audience of Bengali speakers unable to read Sanskrit.

To outline worship patterns in this work I focus on Kṛṣṇadāsa’s “Rādhāology” and “Caitanyology” before singling out one narrative passage for special attention and then looking briefly at how image worship is represented generally in this text.

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<sup>42</sup> See Stewart, 356, and footnote. The bulk of scholarly opinion places the work’s completion between 1609 and 1615.

<sup>43</sup> See also Snell 1994: 12. “The [CC] combines accessibility with authority, and is surely a classic of its genre” that produced “a comprehensive view not only of the events of Caitanya’s life, but of what Caitanya’s life *meant*.”

<sup>44</sup> The “six Gosvāmīs” were the principal followers of Caitanya in Vrindavan—Rūpa, Sanātana, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Raghunāthadāsa, Jīva, and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa. All except Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, of whom no extant writings are known, wrote Sanskrit elaborations on Caitanya’s teachings in varied genres. See De 1986: 111-65 for an overview of their lives and works. See O’Connell (1999: 228-30) on their influence and the effects of their writings for the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava community.

### 1.2.2.1 Rādhāology: Kṛṣṇa's Ontological and Devotional Counterpart

If the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* seems to keep Kṛṣṇa in centre-stage, to the Caitanyaites the *Bhāgavata's* reticence about Rādhā in no way indicates that she is of lesser prominence. True, the mark of Rādhā's importance in cult practice through the presence of her *arcā-mūrti* images in temples will apparently be delayed until some one hundred years after Caitanya's demise.<sup>45</sup> But the doctrinal legitimation preparing for her worship in temples alongside Kṛṣṇa found important explication in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. To expound on Rādhāology is a major aim of Kṛṣṇadāsa, and indeed for him Caitanya's *avatāra* (descent) into the world is fully comprehensible only in light of her identity as Kṛṣṇa's ontological counterpart. Although modern scholarship tells a different story about the development of Rādhā's metaphysical status and Rādhā-worship, Kṛṣṇadāsa represents the doctrine that prevailed among the Vrindavan Caitanyaites following Caitanya's demise in 1533.<sup>46</sup> According to this view, as Kṛṣṇa is the eternal Lord, the complete powerful (*pūrṇa-śaktimāt*) Bhagavān in his original form, so Rādhā is Kṛṣṇa's eternal counterpart, his personal energy (*svarūpa-śakti* or *hlādinī-śakti*) or fully existent power (*pūrṇa-śakti*) described in pāñcarātric literature (CC 1.4.59, 96). Kṛṣṇadāsa's theological elaboration on this "ultimate sacred postulate" unfolds within a narrative logic of divine re-enactment: Caitanya and his friends, conceived as "re-descendants" of Kṛṣṇa and his associates, perform the encore of Kṛṣṇa-*līlā* in a style suitable for the present degraded age (Kali-yuga) (CC 1.4 passim). In this conception of Rādhā as the supreme Power (a reinterpretation of pāñcarātric identification of Lakṣmī as Śakti), she is the most exemplary worshipper of Kṛṣṇa alluded to in the *Rāsa-pāñcādhyāya* of the BhP.<sup>47</sup> In addition to the qualities

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<sup>45</sup> A history of the appearance of Rādhā images in early Caitanya Vaiṣṇava worship is wanting. According to Gopal Narayan Bahura, "Śrī Rāsaraseśvarī Śrī Rādhā, who stays on Govinda's [the image established by Rūpa] left side, was offered to the Lord in V.S. 1690/A.D. 1633, when the king of Uḍisā, Puruṣottama Deva, son of Pratāparudra, had them married with great pomp" (Bahura, 206).

<sup>46</sup> The scholarly account is summarised by Wulff, 109. See also Bailly 2001 for an exploration of her relationship to Lakṣmī.

<sup>47</sup> Kṛṣṇadāsa interprets Rādhā's name as deriving from *ārādhana*, to worship, and points to its derivative, *ārādhitaḥ* (BhP 10.30.28) as alluding to Rādhā. According to that passage the *gopīs*, while searching for Kṛṣṇa, deduce that "one *gopī*" has won his special favour: "Indeed, she perfectly worshipped Bhagavān, who is Hari, the supreme Lord. Abandoning us and being so pleased [by her], Govinda must have led her to a secret place" (CC 1.4.87-88, quoting BhP 10.30.28, this translation by Schweig 1998: 425).

of selfless love possessed by all the *gopīs* (*prema-bhakti*), Rādhā has special power to charm Kṛṣṇa and unique capacity to plumb the depths of devotional emotion (*māhābhāva*). As Donna Wulff notes, both these qualities point to the intensity and purity of spontaneous devotional love which, in turn, elicits from her devotees a marked absence of the inclination to petition her for favours. Rather, they become “absorbed in the unfolding, minutely detailed story of her love for her Lord” (Wulff: 131) as vicarious participants in the drama of *bhakti*.

#### 1.2.2.2 Caitanyology: Understanding Rādhā Through Caitanya

According to Kṛṣṇadāsa’s theology of Caitanya’s descent, the dual identity of Caitanya as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined grounds such a shift in devotees’ worship mentality (Stewart 1985: 361). But before considering this further, a few more words on the distinction between *vaidhī-* and *rāgānugā-sādhana* are in order. Whereas earlier we considered a distinction between “intellectual *bhakti*” and “emotional *bhakti*,” in CC we encounter *vaidhī-bhakti* in contrast to *rāgānugā-bhakti* as a distinction, roughly, between exoteric (more or less publicly accessible) and esoteric devotional practices. This distinction, as articulated by the Vrindavan Gosvāmīs and consolidated by Kṛṣṇadāsa, has remained important for Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas up to the present.

Kṛṣṇadāsa suggests that *vaidhī-sādhana*, or practice regulated by the rules of scripture, confirms and perpetuates the principle of *aiśvarya*, or majesty and grandeur (Stewart 1985: 409-10).<sup>48</sup> It is based on and governed by that aspect of Kṛṣṇa’s identity elaborated in the Pāñcarātra literature, wherein he is known especially as Nārāyaṇa, accompanied by his fourfold host of expansions or *vyūhas* as the sources of yet further expansions.<sup>49</sup> The soteriological aim of this practice is one of four types of *mokṣa*, or liberation from the temporal world—each type bringing one into eternal association with Nārāyaṇa and into close approximation of his characteristics (CC

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<sup>48</sup> This is expressed in terms of *vaidhī-sādhana*’s inability to render access to Kṛṣṇa as Svayam Bhagavān (CC 2.24.84), to the taste of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s service (CC 2.21.119), or to Kṛṣṇa in Vrindavan (CC 2.8.226).

<sup>49</sup> Kṛṣṇadāsa goes to some lengths to argue for the identity of Kṛṣṇa as the ultimate form of Godhead (basing his argument mainly on the BhP), under which the forms of Nārāyaṇa/Vāsudeva of Pāñcarātra are subsumed (CC 1.2). The most systematic presentation of the argument is given by Jiva Gosvāmī in his *Bhagavat-sandarbhā*. A key argument is Kṛṣṇa’s possession of qualities (evident mainly from narratives in the BhP) related to *mādhurya*, qualities claimed to be not exhibited by Nārāyaṇa *et al.*

1.3.15-18). The venerative mood of such worship is one marked by formality and predictability. But with all the propriety and sobriety of such worship, Kṛṣṇadāsa tells his readers, Kṛṣṇa is far from satisfied (CC 1.4.17; Stewart 1985: 384-5).

As we saw in the BhP context, what is missing from the majestic mood—for both Kṛṣṇa and devotees of the appropriate temperament—is the intimacy afforded by its counterpart, *mādhurya*, or the sweetness of tender affection.<sup>50</sup> To cultivate a mood of this sort entails a course of practice which subordinates attention to scriptural rules (as enumerated in pāñcarātric texts or the *Haribhaktivilāsa*) to the nurturing of particular devotional emotions in imitation of exemplary devotees of Kṛṣṇa. Like *vaidhī-sādhana*, this is also a *practice*, called *rāgānugā-sādhana* because its practitioner must follow (*anugā*) a “paradigmatic individual” (Haberman 1988: 47-51) who is eternally absorbed in *rāga*, or loving affection, in relation to Kṛṣṇa.

For Kṛṣṇadāsa’s devoted readers, Caitanya himself is both the exemplar for devotional practice (*upāya*) and, as the dual-form of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, the goal (*upeya*) and object of worship (Stewart 1985: 48-52<sup>51</sup>). As ideal practitioner, Caitanya is reported to have taken great pleasure in hearing the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* recited by his closest companions, as well as the poetry of Caṇḍidāsa, Vidyāpati, and Jayadeva (CC 1.13.42).<sup>52</sup> Indeed he is repeatedly portrayed as responding with overwhelming ecstatic emotion to the descriptions of Kṛṣṇa and his devotees found in devotional literature, which induced in Caitanya what seemed to be the self-same feelings the literature describes.<sup>53</sup>

Complementary and integral to Caitanya’s devotional hearing of scripture is his devotional recitation, or chanting—especially of *Kṛṣṇa-nāma*, the divine names of Kṛṣṇa. According to Kṛṣṇadāsa’s theology, Caitanya’s purpose for descent has both an exoteric and an esoteric component which, I would suggest, find their nexus in his frequent demonstrations of *Kṛṣṇa-nāma-kīrtanam* or *saṁkīrtanam*—the congrega-

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<sup>50</sup> We should also note that the iconographic distinction between four-armed, supra-human Nārāyaṇa and the human-like two-armed Kṛṣṇa is crucial in the *aiśvarya*—*mādhurya* polarity. Thus the sentiments dominated by *mādhurya* are made possible because Kṛṣṇa’s human-like form is approachable in ways which Nārāyaṇa is not.

<sup>51</sup> Stewart takes this terminology as applied by B.B. Majumdar, *Śrī caitanya caritera upādāna* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1959), 112-13.

<sup>52</sup> According to Kṛṣṇadāsa, Caitanya found copies of two other works, *Brahma-saṁhitā* and *Kṛṣṇa-karnāmṛta*, in the course of his south Indian travels, which he also greatly prized (CC 2.1.120).

<sup>53</sup> See Tuck, esp. 76-7, for discussion on the triggering of Caitanya’s ecstasy.

tional singing of Kṛṣṇa's names.<sup>54</sup> On the esoteric side, Caitanya's dual identity enabled him, as Kṛṣṇa, to experience fully what it is like to love Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā. And what Rādhā (appearing as Caitanya) *does* in her longing for Kṛṣṇa is to chant his names, invoking Kṛṣṇa's presence by virtue of the non-duality between divine name and divine named. On the exoteric side, Caitanya fulfilled the corrective role of the divine descent for the present age (*yugāvatāra*) to re-establish religious norms for society (*dharma*) by introducing the worship practice appropriate for Kali-yuga, namely *nāma-saṁkīrtanam*.<sup>55</sup> Kṛṣṇadāsa deftly portrayed Caitanya as realising both exoteric and esoteric purposes, celebrating the *Kṛṣṇa-nāma* (often referred to as *hari-nāma*) itself as the *avatāra* of the present age. By presenting Caitanya as the exemplar chanter, Kṛṣṇadāsa effectively offered his readers the sense of open access to Caitanya's esoteric teaching and thereby softened the sharp distinction between *vidhi* and *rāga*.<sup>56</sup> In terms of *vidhi/rāga* mapping, Caitanya is located within the *vidhi-plus*, *rāga-plus* quadrant.

### 1.2.2.3 Worship of Jagannātha

As the exemplary hearer and chanter of scripture and divine names, Caitanya is portrayed by Kṛṣṇadāsa as the ideal worshipper of Kṛṣṇa in his *arcā-mūrti*, or physical image. Remaining as a *sannyāsī* (renunciant) most of the second half of his life in Jagannātha Pūrī, east India (present-day Orissa), Caitanya demonstrated the integration of image worship (*mūrti-sevā*) and the chanting of Kṛṣṇa's names (*nāma-sevā*). We are told that daily Caitanya enjoyed a festival in the massive temple of Jagannātha, the "Lord of the universe,"<sup>57</sup> leading his followers in exuberant dancing and

<sup>54</sup> Here I take issue with Stewart, who seems to argue that *kīrtanam* was understood to be strictly a practice within *vaidhī-sādhana*, even if preparatory for *rāgānuga-sādhana* (Stewart, 401). As we shall see in the next section, Caitanya's most profound demonstrations of devotional ecstasy occurred, according to Kṛṣṇadāsa, during *kīrtanam* performances.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, CC. 1.3.40, 62, 77; 1.7.73-76.

<sup>56</sup> Comparing this practice of *hari-nāma* chanting with the *mantra* meditation in Pāñcarātra texts suggests an interesting difference. Whereas in the latter case, as noted earlier, a balance is struck between *mantra* meditation and image worship as an accommodation of the notion of grace, in the Caitanya tradition *hari-nāma* is given greater purificatory value over image worship, although, as we see in the next section, image worship remains important enough to be extensively mentioned in the CC.

<sup>57</sup> The Jagannātha image, along with Baladeva (Balabhadra), Subhadrā, and Sudarśana images, have a long history of being variously regarded by successive clans of worshippers. These unusual, semi-representational forms are seen by Vaiṣṇavas as, respectively, forms of Kṛṣṇa, his brother Balarāma, sister Subhadrā and the disc weapon of Viṣṇu.

loud chanting of the “*Kṛṣṇa-mantra*”<sup>58</sup> before the smiling images of Jagannātha, Baladeva and Subhadrā (CC 2.11.213-40). At other times Caitanya would gaze for long periods of time on the form of Jagannātha, whom he saw as Kṛṣṇa (CC 2.2.54); or he would jubilantly honour Jagannātha’s abundant food “remnants” (*prasāda*, offered several times throughout the day by the temple priests) with his companions (CC 2.6.39-46; 2.12.197-202).<sup>59</sup> The overriding spirit of these events is one of pious but lively celebration of Kṛṣṇa’s magnanimity in bestowing divine love. Jagannātha’s *aiśvarya* quality, characterised by the elaborately and meticulously executed worship performed by numerous brahmin priests, gives way to *mādhurya-bhāva*, the mood of sweetness, in the presence of Caitanya and his companions as they devotionally sing and dance with spirited abandon.

The convergence of these two moods, the intersection of formal worship and intense devotion in CC, is most prominently highlighted in the yearly observance of Rathayātrā, the grand chariot procession with the massive, otherwise immobile, wooden temple images (CC 2.12-14).<sup>60</sup> According to Kṛṣṇadāsa’s account, Caitanya’s ecstatic dancing before the chariot of Jagannātha is prompted by his mood as Rādhā inducing Kṛṣṇa to return from majestic Dvārakā to the forest of Vrindavan at the time of their meeting in Kurukṣetra (narrated in BhP 10.82). In this account Kṛṣṇadāsa takes full opportunity to portray Caitanya as a divinity who magically appears simultaneously among seven separate groups of singing devotees; who exhibits radical ecstatic bodily transformations;<sup>61</sup> and who receives worship by the Oriyan king, Pratāparūdra. The seeming inertness of the wooden form of Jagannātha, starkly contrasting with Caitanya’s effervescence, becomes softened as his divine counter-

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<sup>58</sup> This “*Kṛṣṇa-mantra*” seems to refer to what present-day practitioners call the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* (*hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare / hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*) that combines three names, all in the vocative grammatical case, making it an address rather than, strictly speaking, a mantra. This is unlike most Pāñcarātric *mantras* of address, which refer to the divinity worshipped less directly and more formally, in the dative case. *Hare* is the vocative for both *hari* and *harā*, the former a name for Viṣṇu, the latter a name for the feminine *śakti* of *bhagavān*. Strangely enough, the “*mahā-mantra*” is nowhere in the CC in its complete form, the closest partial reference being at 3.9.56. It is, however, mentioned in Vṛndāvanadāsa’s *Caitanya-bhāgavata*.

<sup>59</sup> The CC references are only examples. Several episodes could be additionally cited.

<sup>60</sup> For a study of this festival as presently observed, see Marglin 1999.

<sup>61</sup> Caitanya’s limbs are said to have, due to extreme ecstatic emotion, become at times elongated followed by extreme shrinking. These bodily transformations, if juxtaposed with the ritual bodily transformations we will consider in connection with the HBV—initiation and image consecration—suggest a radical visible difference between *sādhana-bhakti* and *bhāva-* or *prema-bhakti*, although in this case Caitanya is considered unique as Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in person, not as an exemplar for others to follow.

part, surrounded by throngs of pilgrims, draws him to “Vrindavan,” the local Guṇḍicā temple.

This episode of divine transformation marks a central “charismatic moment” in the CC, as a counterpart and complement to the *Rasa-līlā-pāñcādhyāya* in the BhP. Combining both written and ritual intertextuality, it interweaves several semantic elements including, as I have already noted, formality/majesty with devotional emotion/intimacy. Further themes treated in this passage include renunciation (Caitanya’s status as a *sannyāsī*) versus royalty (Caitanya’s interactions with King Pratāparūdra); the sharing of divinity (or divine charisma) between Caitanya and Jagannātha; pilgrimage (the Vraja residents to Kurukṣetra and Bengal devotees to Puri) and longing for the familiar (Jagannātha Rathayātrā as re-enactment of the Vraja residents’ nostalgia); and the nature of purity and auspiciousness (Caitanya’s *guṇḍicā-mārjana-līlā*, the cleansing of the Guṇḍicā temple prior to Rathayātrā). Each of these themes come into play in variations of Caitanyaite image worship liturgical order, as we shall see in subsequent chapters.

I call attention to one verse from this episode as described in the CC, as representative of several of these themes. It is set as the last of four Sanskrit prayers recited by Śrī Caitanya as he paused from dancing during Jagannātha’s Rathayātrā festival. It is a declarative verse we will encounter again in chapter four in the context of contemporary Western Kṛṣṇa *arcanam*. For the present, we can simply note the way it blends and juxtaposes formality/majesty (the sphere of *vidhi*) with emotion/intimacy (the sphere of *rāga*) in terms of the worshipper’s identity.

I am neither a brahmin nor a kṣatriya, neither a vaiśya nor a śūdra; I am neither a brahmacārin nor a gr̥hastha, neither a vānaprastha nor a sannyāsin.<sup>62</sup> Rather (I am) the servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of that brilliant supremely blissful ocean of nectar, the Maintainer of the *gopīs* [Kṛṣṇa].<sup>63</sup>

The list of identity denials is counterbalanced by a single affirmation of servitorship to Kṛṣṇa. As recited by Caitanya it serves both as a declaration of his own mood (*bhāva*) of service to Kṛṣṇa and as a lesson for his followers. As we shall see in chapter three, the *varṇāśrama* social order is not rejected by his followers, but it is subordinated and placed in tension with spiritual identity.

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<sup>62</sup> These are the four classical *varṇas* and four *āśramas* of the social and life-stage system.

<sup>63</sup> This verse is quoted in CC. 2.13.80; BRS 2.1.103; *Padyāvalī* 74; *Bhajana-rahasya* 6.6.

#### 1.2.2.4 Image Worship in Caitanya-caritāmṛta

I have briefly outlined the CC's Rādhāology and Caitanyology discourse and how these are given narrative and ritual dimensions in the Rathayātrā account. Further to note, in contrast to the BhP, is the fairly pervasive and explicit presence of image worship throughout the text. When Caitanya travels, he visits various temples to worship the presiding deity (sometimes Śiva) or hears about famous *mūrtis* and their legends of interaction with revered devotees; various temple priests are positively encountered; a temple image's festival is described in detail; remnants (*prasāda*) of Kṛṣṇa images' food offerings are frequently distributed (and each dish listed); a detailed account of how one devotee shops for the best fruits and vegetables to offer to his household image of Kṛṣṇa is given, and so on. Indeed, Kṛṣṇadāsa gives credit for the writing of his book to Madana-mohana, the image of Kṛṣṇa that had been worshipped by Sanātana Gosvāmī in Vrindavan.<sup>64</sup> Thus throughout the work there is emphasis on the divine character and live presence of Kṛṣṇa's image, whereby the principle of divine reciprocation that constitutes *bhakti* finds instantiation in encounters between spiritual adepts and various *arcā-mūrtis*. The CC is by no means unique in having such accounts; rather it represents a vast pan-Indian literary genre still expanding today, and usually associated with specific sacred locales. But the CC is remarkable for its sustained biographical style, keeping Caitanya's life as the frame story for the work's devotional constellation of themes, incidents, and personages.

Within this biographical frame of divine charisma we also find indications of religio-political instability, with Muslim martial pressures forcing the removal of images from Vrindavan temples to outlying hiding places. This marks the beginning of a process of image migration, with several of the main Vrindavan *arcā-mūrtis* relocating eventually to Jaipur (Rajasthan), under the protection of the Rajput Hindu kings. As the Caitanyaite devotional community develops into an institution, its legitimacy becomes contested. The relocation of images—in particular of the *mūrtis* known as Govinda, Dāmodara, Gopīnātha, and Madana-mohana—eventually precipitated institutional contestation within the wider Vaiṣṇava fold between Rāmānandīs and Caitanyaite, prompting textual apology for Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa image worship by the lat-

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<sup>64</sup> CC. 1.8.78.

ter.<sup>65</sup> Both physical relocation and textual apology can be seen as “formal indices of prevailing conditions,” Rappaport’s lowest category of understandings in the hierarchical dimension of liturgical orders. As we shall see in chapter four, location, relocation and replication of images *and* texts will be a persistent theme to the present day, when prevailing conditions include both complicated ephemeral circumstances and the pervasive *zeitgeist* of modernity.

### I.2.3 *Haribhaktivilāsa: A Ritual Manual for Vaiṣṇava Householders*

An important component of the “rich frame” of literature surrounding the *Bhāgavata Purāna* for the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas was—and indeed remains to this day—the *Haribhaktivilāsa*, completed by 1541 and attributed to both Gopāla Bhaṭṭa (ca. 1500-1586) and Sanātana (ca. 1488-1558), two of the six Vrindavan Gosvāmīs.<sup>66</sup> Significantly, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa came from south India, possibly from a priestly family of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community from which he could have drawn considerable erudition enabling him to compile such a lengthy compendium on Vaiṣṇava ritual.<sup>67</sup> Its detailed explication on liturgical aspects of temple worship and related topics can be seen as peripheral to the “picture” and “focal point” of Caitanyaite devotional theology. This could partially explain certain omissions one would not expect of a work associated with the Caitanyaite movement, such as the lack of explicit direction to

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<sup>65</sup> See chapter two, fn. 5. The discourse sustained in Caitanya Vaiṣṇava devotional literature extends to further elaborations and clarifications over contested issues. Here I refer to the eighteenth century controversy over Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship that was answered by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana (ca. 1680-1775) in his *Govinda Bhāṣya*, a *Brahmasūtra* commentary (for which Baladeva gives credit to the Govindadeva *mūrti* presently worshipped in Jaipur).

<sup>66</sup> The fact that *Haribhaktivilāsa* remains in print in more than one edition to the present is a good indication of its persistent relevance. The exact involvement of the two Gosvāmīs is not certain, though it is likely that Gopāla Bhaṭṭa wrote the text, with Sanātana subsequently writing the *Dig-darśinī-tīkā* commentary. See Bhaktivedanta Swami: CC 2.1.35 Purport, and De (1986: 408). Broo (2003b) provides an excellent review of the evidence on dating, authorship and original purpose of the text; Kapoor 1977: 54-56 argues for the collaborative nature of the Gosvāmīs’ works. It should be kept in mind when considering authorship of pre- or early-modern texts in India that, as Kaviraj notes (74) “the talent of the author consisted in a kind of erasure of the individual, not in taking an interesting individual line which contested, competed with others or replaced them by virtue of its greater truth value.”

<sup>67</sup> De (1986: 125) says all agree on his south Indian origin, but that his personal history and ancestry is contested. Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas consider him to have been a son of Venkata Bhaṭṭa, a Śrīvaiṣṇava brahmin met by Caitanya during his travels. See Bhaktivedānta Swami: CC 1.10.105 Purport.

worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.<sup>68</sup> Conversely the HBV can be seen as providing the vehicle of practical activity of *bhakti* in the dharmic idiom, allowing practitioners within the wider circle of Vaiṣṇavas into the inner circle of esoteric, emotional Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*. As S.K. De notes,

Although the highest form of Caitanyaism dispenses with mere Śāstric [scriptural] rule and outward ceremony, and lays stress upon an inner and more esoteric way of realisation, the faith does not at the same time ignore the impulse to devotional acts which comes from the injunction of the Vaiṣṇava Śāstra and outward forms of piety. The comparatively mechanical process of the Vaidhī Sādhana *bhakti*, which depends upon Vidhi or injunction of the Śāstra, is an important step to the highest type of spontaneous Prema-*bhakti*; and as such it demanded the attention and careful treatment of the professed theologians of the sect (De 1986: 408).

Hence the *Haribhaktivilāsa* (The Charm of Devotion to the Lord<sup>69</sup>) stipulates the details constituting this “important step” of *vaidhī-sādhana* in the injunctive idiom typical of Dharmasāstra and purāṇic passages. The HBV backs its injunctions by references from well over one hundred different Sanskrit sources considered authoritative. Here we find no narratives as predominate in the BhP (which HBV quotes 120 times) and in the CC, the two other loci of our scriptural triangle. However we do find profuse eulogy (*māhātmya*) of everything from rising before dawn to greet the temple *mūrti* (having performed proper ritual bath, in turn having brushed one’s teeth with a proper sort and length of wooden twig), to constructing a flower pavilion (*mandapa*) for the *mūrti*, to remaining awake throughout the night of the eleventh lunar day of each fortnight (*ekādaśī-tīthi*), to constructing a permanent temple. We also find numerous ritual procedures and mantras, seasonal observances, and daily practices, especially practices centred on the worship of sacred images. The texture of HBV, all in all, is rather “stiff” with its injunctive style, and points to what Roy Rappaport identifies as a basic element of ritual generally, namely the sense of

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<sup>68</sup> See also Broo (2003b), for further discussion on Caitanyaite omissions of the text as indicative of an aim to serve a broader Vaiṣṇava audience among which a nascent Caitanyaite sampradāya was yet to be clearly defined.

<sup>69</sup> The text is also referred to as *Bhagavatbhaktivilāsa*. Broo (2003b) offers the interesting and plausible suggestion that this was the initial title and that later the same, combined with its one commentary, became known as the *Haribhaktivilāsa*.

*invariance* (Rappaport: 36-37). As such, it is largely a book of *liturgical orders*, with a preservative function.<sup>70</sup>

From among the circa 140 main topics covered in its twenty chapters, I will sketch three paradigmatic clusters of ritual found in *Haribhaktivilāsa*. Each of these clusters are about beginnings—the beginning of ritual life for a practitioner (initiation, *dīkṣā*), the beginning of “life” for an *arcā-mūrti* (consecration, *prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā*), and the celebration of Kṛṣṇa’s “beginning” in this world (Kṛṣṇa’s birth celebration, *janmāṣṭhamī-tīthi*). As beginnings, these ritual clusters serve as “charismatic moments” to the extent formal, liturgical orders can do so. Yet as liturgical orders, these segments also represent continuity with past performance and contiguity with pan-Indian brahmanical and Tantric traditions.

### 1.2.3.1 Initiation: Entry into a Ritual World

As prescribed in HBV, Vaiṣṇava initiation can be comprehended as a process of *completion* of an otherwise incompletely, if naturally, formed human being. It can therefore be thought of as a constructive process echoing the constructive rituals we encountered in Vedic sacrifice. In this respect it is certainly akin to the *upanayana* rite of initiation into Vedic study. As Mircea Eliade observes, initiation as a pan-cultural phenomenon involves some notion of completion of what is otherwise left incomplete by nature (Eliade: 187; B.K. Smith 1998: 92). In both Vedic and Tantric traditions, completion in terms of *dīkṣā* involves divinisation, a notion already found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*: “He who is consecrated approaches the gods and becomes one of the gods” (Gonda 1965: 337).<sup>71</sup> Indeed, divinisation takes place in grand manner in the HBV *dīkṣā* rite. Prominent among several rites extending over three days is an affusion rite (*abhiṣeka*) received by the initiate (*śiṣya*) as water poured over him by Viṣṇu himself, assisted by his *vyūha* expansions, the several cosmic *devatās* or gods, and lower powers and elements, all assisted by the guru (HBV 2.119-26).<sup>72</sup> This *abhiṣeka* is reminiscent of the consecration of a sovereign,

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<sup>70</sup> Rappaport writes, “Liturgy preserves the conventions it encodes inviolate in defiance of the vagaries of ordinary practice, thereby providing them with existence independent of, and insulated against, the statistical averages which characterize behavior” (130, emphasis in original).

<sup>71</sup> ŚB. 3,1,1,8: *yo dīkṣate sa devatānām eko bhavati*.

<sup>72</sup> Chapter two of HBV offers three different *dīkṣā* procedures. The first and longest (to which I refer here) is identified within the text itself as Tantric; the second, shorter version is purāṇic; and the third, shortest version is a *samkṣipta-dīkṣā*, or “abbreviated initiation.”

empowering the *śiṣya* much as a king is invested with royal power, with all the cosmic heads of state participating in his “enthronement.”<sup>73</sup> But the disciple’s empowerment is considered to go beyond that of a king: Through ritual rebirth he conquers the greatest adversary, death, to remain perpetually under the shelter of Viṣṇu (Gonda 1965: 424).

After the *abhiṣeka* the *śiṣya* receives a mantra whispered in his right ear by the guru. With this mantra he is to worship Kṛṣṇa, identifying Lord, guru, and mantra as a unity.<sup>74</sup> His empowerment consists in approaching his worshipable divinity by entering into a position of confidentiality granted by his guru. Considerable attention is therefore given to rendering honour to one’s guru, the qualifications of whom are elaborated in the first and second chapters of HBV (HBV 1.32-58, 2.140-143). It is understood to be through the guru’s blessings upon the *śiṣya* that the latter is transformed, and the concrete manifestation of blessing is the particular mantra given for worship.

Therefore among the several elements of the HBV *dīkṣā* rite, the most essential is the reception of the mantra. HBV offers an analogy to illustrate the transformative character of *dīkṣā* reminiscent of Tantric alchemy: “As bell-metal is transformed into gold by an alchemical process, similarly by the process of *dīkṣā*, the second birth of a human being takes place.”<sup>75</sup> Yet this transformation is not to be conceived in mechanistic terms; rather, it is understood to be afforded by the acquisition of transcendent knowledge (*divyam jñānam*) accompanied by the destruction of one’s *pāpa*, or sinful, inauspicious activities.<sup>76</sup> Despite the royal imagery surrounding *dīkṣā* promotion to worthiness for worship, the substance of the activating knowledge out of which wor-

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<sup>73</sup> Importance of a personage is often signaled in classical Indian literature by an assembly of gods at his (and sometimes her) birth, coronation, marriage, or death, e.g. the assembly of gods at the birth of Arjuna in *Mahābhārata*, or Pṛthu’s coronation in *Bhāgavata Purāna*. The royal motif present in this rite reflects the majestic (*aiśvarya*) side of the polarity between it and ‘sweetness’ (*mādhurya*) that we discussed in our survey of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

<sup>74</sup> HBV 2.131 Ṭīkā: *guruś ca devatā ca mantraś ca teṣām aikyaṃ cintayan taṃ mantram uc-cārayet*. This notion of identity would seem to be more in accord with the earlier rather than the later Pāñcarātric concept of mantra as vehicle of grace, as we considered earlier. Since the mantra is to be received directly from the guru who deems the disciple fit to receive it, no such mantras are included in the *Haribhaktivilāsa* text.

<sup>75</sup> HBV 2.12, quoting *Tattva-sāgara*, (my translation). See D. G. White, 52ff, on the *lohavāda* or transmutational type of tantric alchemy, aimed at gaining invincibility and transcendence of the human condition.

<sup>76</sup> HBV 2.9, quoting *Viṣṇu-yāmala*. See also Nyāya definitions of *dīkṣā* (Gonda 1965: 319).

thiness arises consists in understanding one's dependent position in relation to the Lord, the object of worship.

Transformation/divinisation brings other changes as well. Through initiation rites a new initiate officially enters a community of practitioners (*sādhakas*) centred around certain sacred texts and persons.<sup>77</sup> In Vaiṣṇava *dīkṣā*, the initiate is formally accepted as a practitioner of *sādhana* according to the directions prescribed within the corpus of Vaiṣṇava scriptures as applied by one's guru. A careful follower of HBV, as an initiated practitioner, would enter a life of high ritual density (Bell 1997: 173), observing formal, scripturally prescribed behaviour as a significant portion of his daily routine. Indeed, no less than 104 daily duties (listed in the second chapter) are prescribed for the initiate, all relating to the worship of Viṣṇu.<sup>78</sup> Many of these are to be performed "according to the rules" (*yathā vidhi*) which are either found in HBV itself, in other Vaiṣṇava literature, or are taught by one's guru. The fact that initiation signals entrance into a textual community is underscored by an injunction included among these 104 duties to daily hear from scriptures, especially the BhP (HBV 2.157 and *Ṭikā*) which are themselves containing considerable *vidhi* along with or woven within the narratives focusing on the emotions of *bhakti*.

The emphasis on study and recitation of texts following Vaiṣṇava *dīkṣā* reminds one again of the Vedic *upanayana*, which allows a young boy of twice-born status to study the Veda. Yet there is a notable difference between Vaiṣṇava *dīkṣā* and Vedic *upanayana*, as Douglas Brooks suggests in the context of Śākta Tantric Śrīvidyā worship (D. Brooks: 166-73). Distinguishing between non-Tantric brahmanism's "convergent map" and the Tantric "utopic map" of the world, Brooks emphasizes the latter's insularity, as the creation of "a world *within* a world" characterised by *disjunction*, or ignoring of things outside the ritual sphere. As a process of beginning, Vaiṣṇava *dīkṣā* is in this sense also a process of isolation to maximize the felicity conditions for enacting devotional truth.

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<sup>77</sup> I use the masculine pronoun intentionally; the texts describing formal rites seem to be exclusive in regarding initiation as reserved for males, although, as we have seen, the *Bhāgavata Purāna* suggests the inclusion of women in the formal practices of worship. This conservatism in the HBV in regard to ritual is, as De says, "noteworthy," in that a counter-trend seems evident in the tradition which accommodated women and lower castes in some measure.

<sup>78</sup> An important daily rite listed among the 104 duties is *bhūta-suddhi*, or purification of the elements (HBV 2.155). Space limitations prevent me from elaborating on transformative parallels with *dīkṣā* and *prāna-pratiṣṭha* rites, but I will discuss it in another context in chapter four.

### I.2.3.2 Prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā: Giving Life to Stone

Following the general style of Pāñcarātra literature, the *Haribhaktivilāsa* includes a chapter (chapter nineteen) on the ritual establishment (*pratiṣṭhā*) of images.<sup>79</sup> Like the *dīkṣā* rites, having as its general theme *transformation* and *sacralization*, image consecration is accomplished through ritual actions that are markedly parallel to but far more elaborate than those for initiation. The garment of scripture that clothes image worship is clearly on display in these rites, as indicated by one of the first topics of the chapter, *sthāpakādi-lakṣaṇam* (qualification of those performing the consecration).

The priest must be competent in Pāñcarātra and the practices of mantra and *tantra* (here: ritual procedures); he must be conversant with “all parts of the Veda” and familiar with the Purāṇas; and he must be a *tattva-jñā*, a “knower of the true nature of Brahman” (HBV 19.86, 89). A dearth in such qualifications could have dire consequences for everyone involved: “Otherwise there will be constant conflict, anxiety and great fear on the part of the sponsor [of the image], the king, the kingdom, and the priest lacking scriptural competence” (87). Such competence, the text adds (quoting from *Hayaśīrṣa Pāñcarātra* which in turn echoes the final verse of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*), depends on the priest’s devotion to his guru and to Viṣṇu. Hence success in invoking the divinity in an image is not a matter of mere exoteric knowledge or of skills gained exclusively by one’s own efforts (HBV 19.103). Rather, scriptural learning proves itself efficacious when the competent (*adhikarin*) priest is able to invoke the Lord’s presence through visualisation of sacred sound in several stages of manifestation at particular locations in his own body and then in the image.

Indeed, the consecration rite as a whole becomes a nexus for scriptural presence—a recapitulation of brahmanical and Tantric practice in concentrated form to maximize felicitous conditions and minimize the danger associated with invoking a powerful deity. This establishment is accomplished (one hopes) gradually (Davis 1997: 34), through an extended series of rites including constructive procedures for manifesting the bodily parts of the image (*mūrti-sakali-kāraṇam*); with elaborate *nyāsas* (placement of mantras on the different parts of the body) on the image; with

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<sup>79</sup> In this chapter the HBV quotes extensively from the *Hayaśīrṣa Pāñcarātra*, a text associated with the Jagannātha temple in Purī.

the performance of several bathing procedures (*abhiṣekas*) for the image using prescribed ingredients; with fire oblations (*homas*); and with Vedic mantras to accompany the offering of every item to the newly invoked deity. By careful observance of the prescriptions that govern these actions, a previously inert image is expected to come alive, his eyes having been ritually opened (*netronmilanam*) to view his devotees as they offer prayers of praise and submission. Now understood to be an *arcāmūrti*, a worshippable form of the Lord, service is to be carried out much as would be performed by conscientious attendants of a king, following the *vidhi* details for daily worship found in earlier chapters of HBV.

Chapter nineteen is by far the longest chapter in this work (1048 verse couplets), suggesting that its author(s) considered the topic important, possibly in optimistic anticipation of institutional expansion and multiplication of temples. Alternatively, one might view the profusion of detail as an indication of concern or indeed of anxiety about ritual failure. Indeed, as we shall see in our next chapter, the one author, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, found a simpler and possibly more effective way to invoke the Lord, namely to cause him to become “self-manifest” (*svayam vyakta*).<sup>80</sup>

### 1.2.3.3 Worship as Celebration and Theatre: Kṛṣṇa’s Birthday Festival

If one includes all the various preparatory and concluding rites with the daily image worship procedures proper, the HBV’s third through ninth chapters (some 2864 verse couplets altogether) provide enough prescriptions to satisfy any staunch ritualist. As a compendium, the HBV seems intended as a resource from which a limited selection of rules would be extracted for daily use in a temple or in a household.<sup>81</sup> The prescriptions are largely in keeping with the royal motif of temple worship as would be directed toward Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa. Only occasionally does one

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<sup>80</sup> As Richard Davis notes, one Pāñcarātric text suggests the futility of consecration ritual in and of itself when Viṣṇu says to Brahmā, “God is neither installed nor protected by anyone!” (Davis: 32, quoting *Parama-samhitā* 8.12). Rather, the image’s divinity is to be understood as the result of Viṣṇu’s benevolence. This theme becomes prominent in the account of Rād-hāramaṇa’s appearance, described in the next chapter.

<sup>81</sup> The text itself indicates this sense of how it should be used with occasional qualifying phrases such as “according to [your own] tradition” (*yathā sampradāyam*), “to the extent you are able” (*yāvac śaktyā*), or even “to the extent the mind is satisfied” (*yāvan manaḥ sukhām*) (HBV 5.247).

encounter explicit mention of Kṛṣṇa as the object of worship, mainly in connection with festivals associated with him.<sup>82</sup>

Prominent among these is Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī, Kṛṣṇa's birthday celebration in late summer. Here elaborate worship of Kṛṣṇa is enjoined, if not fully detailed, in the fifteenth Vilāsa among descriptions of various observances held in the course of an annual ritual cycle.<sup>83</sup> Considering the relative brevity of description accorded other festivals, Janmāṣṭamī is clearly held to be quite important, explainable perhaps by the types of benefits (*phala*) promised for its proper observance. As a birth celebration, Janmāṣṭamī features the mood of domesticity common to any birthday observance, wherein safety, fecundity, and prosperity are held as premium values. Proper observance of the festival is rewarded by prosperity, order, and freedom from calamities for the whole country as well as for the home in which it is observed (HBV 15.291). A likely reason for the festival's popularity among childless householders is suggested by the claim that observance of the Janmāṣṭamī vow (*vrata*) will result in the birth of children (HBV 15.296). In general the festival as described in HBV reflects the conservative brahmanical spirit of world maintenance, imbued with the devotional spirit of parental affection (*vātsalya-rasa*).

This observance according to HBV features visual replication. The passage provides a remarkably detailed description of the festival's "staging." Either as a three-dimensional scene or as a large painting, a replica maternity room of Kṛṣṇa's mother, Devakī, is to be constructed or rendered, and appropriate persons and objects according to scriptural (purāṇic) accounts are to be present. Several images (*pratimā*) are to be placed, including an image of Ṣaṣṭhīdevī (thought to be a form of goddess Durgā who protects children). This replication suggests (though it does not prescribe) *re-enactment*, a point of convergence between temple worship and dramatic Kṛṣṇa-*lilā* performance involving worship of the actors as *svarūpas*, direct manifestations of the divinities portrayed. (HBV 15.415-63).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> One striking example of Kṛṣṇa *smaraṇa* (remembrance) appears among prayers recommended for recitation when one awakens in the morning. The verse describes Kṛṣṇa as he might appear after a night of intimacy with his consort (HBV 3.25)—an example of how *rāga* blends with *vidhi* in the textual canon.

<sup>83</sup> A considerably more detailed description of the *abhiseka* procedure within the *Janmāṣṭamī* observance is given by Rūpa Gosvāmī in a short Sanskrit work, *Kṛṣṇajanmatīthividhi*.

<sup>84</sup> Also noteworthy in this festival is its accommodation of Śaktism, in that most recipients of worship are goddesses, namely Lakṣmī, Durgā, and Ṣaṣṭhīdevī. In fact this would seem to be less a celebration of Kṛṣṇa's advent than one in honour of his mother, and of divine motherhood in general.

The initiation and *mūrti* consecration rites sketched previously are meant to be executed in the narrow, exclusive sphere of ritual specialization. Yet onlookers might be expected to attend such events, as they would surely be expected at such occasions as the Janmāṣṭamī festival. Keeping in mind that such festivals are relatively public events, it may not be surprising that HBV's Janmāṣṭamī description shows these "staging" or theatrical features. From another perspective, this public characteristic of festivals might also account for HBV's silence regarding Rāsayātrā -- observance (in Autumn) of the Rasa dance -- since the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas have considered this the most confidential of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.<sup>85</sup>

That the dominant theme of HBV is devotion to Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa is attested in the eleventh chapter. At times the emphasis is on worship in the somewhat preliminary mood of a servant (as in HBV 4.4), but the eleventh chapter in particular extols the elevated levels of devotion, *prema-bhakti* and *śaraṇapatti*, which reach up to moods approximating those of the *gopīs* described in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. *Śaraṇapatti* in particular (also known, as noted previously, as *prapatti*, surrender in helplessness) contrasts with the more formal and systematic *bhakti* as *upāsana* as an alternative means of obtaining the Lord's grace (Gupta 1986: 540). It is significant that the same text (HBV 11.676) found in *Ahirbudhnya Saṁhitā* as well as *Lakṣmī-tantra*, enumerating six features of such self-submissive devotion, is found in the midst of an otherwise overwhelmingly technical text. But its placement there indicates that for this work's author(s) ritual observances were to be regarded as secondary to and supportive of the attainment of devotional perfection. In terms of the hierarchical dimension of liturgical orders, specific rules serve to bring about enactment of the cosmic axiom that devotional reciprocation prevails over and gives meaning to the natural and social order.

The three "beginnings" I have selected aim at continuity, expanding and thereby transforming the temporal dimension of liturgical order from singular ritual events to an uninterrupted transformative practice. In this spirit the author, comparing the glories of worship to mad elephants gamboling about in the forest of scrip-

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<sup>85</sup> De (1986: 410) notes the work's silence on Rāsayātrā. Since this is, as we have noted above in reference to the *Rasa-pāñcādhyāya* of the *Bhāgavata*, the "focal point" of that scripture which is so important for the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas, this silence is remarkable. The emphasis on Janmāṣṭamī could indicate a strong interest in *vātsalya-rasa*, the devotional mood of worshiping Kṛṣṇa as a child. This became highly developed by the followers of Vallabha (b. 1479?), the founder of the so-called Puṣṭi-mārga, a *bhakti* movement contemporary to that of Caitanya.

tures (*śāstrāranya-vihāriṇaḥ*) (HBV 11.269), offers his (mainly brahmin household) readers a veritable forest of texts to guide them toward devotional perfection, especially by means of regulated worship of Kṛṣṇa's or Viṣṇu's *arcā-mūrti*. Such perfection is gained ultimately by grace, through which one gains proper understanding of the value of such regulated worship.<sup>86</sup>

### I.3. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have surveyed ancient and classical brahmanical textual traditions of worship in India as shapers of pre-colonial Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship; then I have focused on three specific texts as largely constitutive of the textual dimension of the cumulative tradition within which Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship has been sustained. I have suggested that these three texts—*Bhāgavata Purāna*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and *Haribhaktivilāsa*—provide a basic vocabulary of forms and relationships for image worship. These show patterns for blending *vidhi* and *rāga* dimensions as warp and woof of a multi-layered garment of *bhakti* worship tradition that distinguishes itself from Vedic ritual and Upaniṣadic meditative traditions even as it draws from them, through the theistic worldview shaped in Pāñcaratras. That *rāga* has re-valorised *vidhi* within this tradition does not mean that *vidhi* becomes unimportant. Rather, Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas would say that *vidhi* finds its real purpose in bringing one to *rāga*. Extending the garment analogy, we shall see in coming chapters how it becomes flexible in specific application, with tighter or looser weave as circumstances change. The doubly provisional character of worship patterns I suggested at the beginning of this chapter will become more apparent.

In the context of Robert Neville *et al*'s exploration of religious truth, we might ask what can be understood thus far in regard to worship as religious truth in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava "canon" as I have presented it. We may consider these authors' three types of religious truth (propositional, expressive, and cultivated/embodied) in turn. First, *propositionally* the identity of Caitanya as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, as worshipper and worshipped, can be considered central. This notion has discursive corollaries, especially the Caitanyaite Vedāntic doctrine of inconceivable identity and differ-

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<sup>86</sup> In the mad elephant analogy of verse 11.269, the elephants (of the glories of worship) cannot be captured (understood) by an insect (an ordinary person) without the power of Śrī Hari (Viṣṇu, but also *hari* can mean "lion") (HBV 11.269 and *Ṭikā*).

ence of *ātman* and *brahman* or the world and *brahman* (*acintya-bhedābheda-vāda*) and the pāñcarātric notions of *vyūha* and *avatāra*.<sup>87</sup> Caitanya's identity is, in turn, linked to the soteriological aim of *prema-bhakti*, in contrast with the Upaniṣadic soteriological aim of liberation (*mokṣa*).

Second, religious truth as *expression* finds its focal point in the Rāsa-līlā-*pañcādhyāya* narrative of the BhP. As the central “charismatic moment” of the BhP, this narrative expresses in dramatic sequence and rich language the perfection of worship, not to be emulated but to be remembered and, indeed, worshipped. It is the central subject for literary elaboration, and as such is the key model for the poetics of image worship. Yet this focal point is situated in a broader picture consisting of these texts as a whole, acting together as “vital conduits through which the divine reveals itself to men [*sic*]” (Gold: 7).

Finally, religious truth as *cultivation* has two interconnected centres. The first and foremost of these is the chanting of divine names, *harināma*; the second is the multiple practices centred on *mūrti-sevā*.<sup>88</sup> Combined, these constitute *sādhana*, the regulated practice aimed at *prema-bhakti*. *Sādhana* implies routine, indeed a quite strict routine of considerable ritual density. Yet the aim, as should be clear from our discussion, is to go beyond routine to self-transformation.

Recognising that the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas hold much in common regarding image worship with other Vaiṣṇava traditions and beyond, we might wonder what in particular characterises worship theology and practices of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. The short answer is that they follow particular texts which others do not—especially *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and to a greater or lesser degree the *Haribhaktivilāsa*. But as we have seen, the latter of these is a wide-ranging compendium of texts largely not exclusive to Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas, and often not even exclusive to Vaiṣṇavas in general. And the former, though structured as vernacular biography, draws heavily from the *Bhāgavata Purāna* which is revered by most Vaiṣṇavas throughout India.

The more detailed answer is to be found in the particular texts followed in specific temples and communities and in the particular practices observed in those

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<sup>87</sup> See Haberman (1988: 38) on the doctrine of *acintya-bhedābheda* in brief. For a more extensive discussion, see Kapoor (1977: 150-75).

<sup>88</sup> To focus on the latter I necessarily neglect the former in this study, though this should not mislead one to think *harināma* to be unimportant in the Caitanyaite tradition. On the contrary, this tradition is to be contrasted with other Vaiṣṇava traditions in its emphasis on *harināma* practice.

communities. This chapter has served to prepare us for just such a study by sketching the broader perspective provided by the texts thus far discussed. Again invoking the picture/frame metaphor, it is these texts which constitute both the picture and its focal point, namely Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* as exemplified by the *gopīs* of Vrindavan, and the frame—the ethos sustained by the motifs of sacrifice, meditation, and worship—which make image worship meaningful in the thousands of Kṛṣṇa temples in Vraja and beyond.

Thinking of texts as providing the contextual setting for image worship should not obscure two other perspectives bearing on our topic. One is suggested by Thomas Coburn when he writes, “Hindus have treated other instances of the Word as dynamic, as spawning all manner of elaborations, some of it being verbal . . . but much of it being found in festival life, image worship, philosophy, and aesthetics, that is, in *darśan(a)* and *rasa*” (Coburn, 121).<sup>89</sup> Applied specifically to sacred images, the Pāñcarātra texts represent just such a view, in that mantra, as sacred sound, is prior to and generative of sacred image. Taking this way of thinking a step further brings one to consider a sacred image itself as a kind of “text” accepted as having canonical status by what Coburn calls “verbal specialists.”<sup>90</sup> Just as texts are “instances of the Word”—the *bhakti* logos, images are also acting as vehicles of truth as expression.

The second perspective is the converse of the first, namely that sacred images produce texts. In the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava instance, one might point not only to several prayers (*stotras*) composed to eulogise particular deities; one could also, for example, consider Kṛṣṇadāsa’s claim that his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* springs from the inspiration bestowed by his worshipping deity Madana-mohana (CC 1.8.73-79). Or one can take some scholars’ view that images preceded texts insofar as ritual precedes myth (Bell: 5-8), and conclude that the garment of texts which clothe these images are superfluous coverings that have imposed meanings on the images and their worship other than what originally led to their creation. In either case one recognises the images as in some way “acting” as causes or sources for the writing of texts, which in turn serve to sustain these images as centres of faith communities.

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<sup>89</sup> Coburn’s first category of ‘the Word’ (his basic unit of Indian scripture) includes all instances of what are considered eternal and immutable, such as the *Ṛgveda* (Coburn, 103-5, 121).

<sup>90</sup> “Verbal specialists” may be brahmins recognised by their community as sufficiently learned, or they may be “those whose spiritual credentials are experiential” (Coburn: 121).

Vrindavan (and the greater Vraja area) is such a faith community which, since the time of the Vrindavan Gosvāmīs, sustains an extensive culture of image worship, *mūrti-sevā*, within a cultural complex we are characterising as “embodied.”<sup>91</sup> Yet the three texts we have discussed show elements of “missionizing” that gave an outward-moving thrust to the Caitanyaite movement characteristic of early modern *bhakti* movements generally. This outward thrust brings a crucial dynamic element into a culture geared largely toward conservation of socio-cosmic order. As a culture of preservation centred on these texts, Vrindavan temples continue to the present day the observance of the several daily offerings (*ārātrika*; *ārati*) and monthly festivals, sustained largely by this scriptural garment (or garments of similar configuration) we have here examined.

The scriptural garment clothing temple worship in Vrindavan is indeed unique by virtue of its location: Scripture gives an air of importance and necessity which gives the *play* of *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* its special flavour, in the land where Kṛṣṇa very seriously engages in his perpetual, supra-temporal play. Where the final objective of worship is to enter permanently into this arena of play, the Kṛṣṇa-devotee quickly learns to “play by the rules”—here the rules of scripture—in order to become an adept participant in the *interplay* of feelings which constitutes *prema-bhakti*. Since so many of the rules centre around thought, word, and action in relation to visible sacred images, these texts are dynamically operative in practitioners’ lives to bring them face to face with he who will bring them to the eternal land of Kṛṣṇa, of which the visible Vrindavan is the point of access. In the next chapter we shift attention to one particular Vrindavan temple community, the Rādhāramaṇa temple, to consider how image worship has been established and perpetuated in an “embodied community,” as an institution located in a sacred pilgrimage area “in dialogue” with more immediate and more distant institutions and modes of worship.

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<sup>91</sup> With “faith community” I am including the whole spectrum of religious affiliation which makes up Vraja’s populace, including pilgrims, and including but not limited to Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas or even Vaiṣṇavas of other traditions.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Temple as Context: The Rādhāramaṇa Temple as Embodied Community

#### II.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I briefly introduced a textual corpus as an important component of context for image worship in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition. In this chapter we will look at these and additional kindred texts as they substantially constitute one particular temple—the Rādhāramaṇa Mandir in Vrindavan—as a locus of contemporary worship sustained by one family line of priests well over four centuries without interruption. Here the patterns for worship we found in the previous chapter will gain life and substance as a particular place and community of praxis seeks to live in accordance with the texts. As an “embodied community,” Rādhāramaṇa temple is configured by its location in northern India, in a pilgrimage town important for Caitanyaites and other Vaiṣṇavas.<sup>1</sup> Its organisational basis in hereditary lineage links it to the brahmanical, pan-Indian Sanskritic culture as well as to local traditions. Yet its affiliation with Caitanya’s legacy gives it a missionizing orientation. In these circumstances we will see how texts play a crucial role in self-understanding and ritual of this community, and how a specific sacred image of Kṛṣṇa provides the locus of sustained actualisation and instantiation of the truths of sacred texts, in ritual and artistic expression. The image of Kṛṣṇa named Rādhāramaṇa can thus be seen as the central embodiment of charisma for the Rādhāramaṇa community, whereby the charisma of persons is understood to originate in the supreme Person, here appearing as the Rādhāramaṇa image (von Stietencron: 25-27). Rādhāramaṇa is also an emblem of successful cultivation of devotion (truth as cultivation and embodiment) in the person of the temple’s founder, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, since the image is said to have appeared miraculously in response to Gopāla’s matured devotional longing.

I focus on the Rādhāramaṇa temple among numerous other possible Caitanyaite temples in Vrindavan—newer or older, larger or smaller, more or less promi-

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<sup>1</sup> Other prominent Vaiṣṇava communities in the Vraja area are the followers of Hita Harivamśa (16<sup>th</sup> c.), the followers of Svāmī Haridās (16<sup>th</sup> c.), the followers of Vallabha (ca. 1479-1530), and followers of Nimbarka (12<sup>th</sup> c.).

ment. An important reason for this selection is its close association with the *Haribhaktivilāsa*. Since the temple's founder, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, is credited with authoring this work<sup>2</sup> (one we are considering central to Caitanya Vaiṣṇava worship practices), in varying degrees the priests of this temple remain conscientious in pursuing the spirit if not always the letter of its injunctions.<sup>3</sup> This is so even though the work was completed *prior* to Rādhāramaṇa's appearance in 1542 and apparently received no editing to indicate this event thereafter.<sup>4</sup> The relationship between Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's text and his temple is one aspect of the case study in this chapter which explores how canon and charisma are intertwined to sustain a locus of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* praxis in an "embodied community." As custodians of tradition, Rādhāramaṇa priests represent both canon and charisma in their acts of daily and special worship of Rādhāramaṇa.

In addition to the special relationship this temple holds to an important text, there are other ways it can be regarded as quite atypical among those of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. Rādhāramaṇa is unique among the Kṛṣṇa images established by Caitanya's original Vrindavan Gosvāmīs as the one image *not* removed to safer environs during iconoclastic raids of the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup> Rādhāramaṇa also claims a unique place theologically for the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas, a feature we will consider after looking at the image's origination story, in which the lives of Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya, and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa come together in the latter's sacred biography.

Our choice of temple is influenced by its atypical features, but also by elements of commonality with other Caitanya Vaiṣṇava temples.<sup>6</sup> Although the Rādhāramaṇa

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<sup>2</sup> The present-day Rādhāramaṇa Goswamis, in particular, credit their founder Gopāla Bhaṭṭa exclusively with the work's authorship. See chapter one, fn. 66 on authorship of HBV.

<sup>3</sup> This is not to say there has been no influence from other temples—among the many neighboring establishments throughout Vrindavan, or further distant—in the ways of performing temple ritual. Determining which are adopted practices from which other temple or tradition is not always easy. As ritual theorists have noted, one characteristic of ritual is its tendency to appear permanent (Bell 1997: 145-53).

<sup>4</sup> Shrivatsa Goswami points out how remarkable it is that no verses of eulogy or obeisance to Rādhāramaṇa are to be found in the work. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa could have easily added them later but did not do so (Interview, Shrivatsa Goswami, 15-9-01). This raises the question of the extent to which Gopāla Bhaṭṭa intended the HBV to be applied in the daily or occasional worship of Rādhāramaṇa.

<sup>5</sup> See Bahura 1996: 195-213; Entwistle 1987; Haberman 1994; Horstmann 1999: 1-29; and Nath 1996: 161-83 for details of this history. That Rādhāramaṇa was not removed is attributed by some to his small size, allowing the image to be hidden during difficult times. Another reason seems to be the community's resolve not to accept royal patronage such as Govindadeva was to receive.

<sup>6</sup> Some obvious common features with other Caitanya Vaiṣṇava temples are: Worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa together; identification of Caitanya with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa; perpetual rather than temporary worship; celebration of common festivals associated with Caitanya and

temple and community may not necessarily be “representative of the tradition” in all particulars (I am doubtful any such temple could be singled out), it provides a rich opportunity to explore several features of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship not readily found together in one place.<sup>7</sup> Finally, again, the Rādhāramaṇa temple represents an “embodied community” characterised by an emphasis on textually based orthopraxy, and by an hereditary priesthood (typical of most Vrindavan temples) belonging to an elite blood lineage of a particular brahmin subcaste. It will thus serve to contrast with the “missionizing tradition” we will encounter in chapters three and four.

The first part of this chapter deals with temple beginnings through the details of the Rādhāramaṇa appearance narrative, a story that contrasts with the image consecration procedure described in the HBV. I then explore the dynamics of charisma as shared between exemplary worshipper and ideal object of worship in this temple, and how mechanisms of perpetuation therein employ the *bhakti* idiom from within the standard Indian hierarchical social model to sustain “felicity conditions” for the truth of Rādhāramaṇa *sevā*. In the second half of the chapter I present some aspects of daily and festival worship in Rādhāramaṇa temple to see how the royal and devotional idioms of worship are creatively blended through the “specific rules” of the liturgical order to accommodate aims of community conservation and individual transformation. Finally, a brief look at a late nineteenth-century comment from a Rādhāramaṇa priest will show a sense of awakening to modern times.

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Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, etc. An interesting comparison could be made with the Banke Bihari temple of the Svāmī Haridās sect (see Haynes 1974), especially as a contrast in daily worship based on a different conception of how this particular image or Kṛṣṇa acts. Haynes (180) writes, “Contrary to the practice in many other temples, there is not an elaborate ritual of ‘waking’ the god in the morning, ‘feeding’ it during the day, and putting it back to bed in the evening. The rationale for this difference is that this particular manifestation of Kṛṣṇa is thought to never take time away from his dalliance with Rādhā for such things as sleeping and eating.”

<sup>7</sup> One practical consideration for my selection of temples: The Rādhāramaṇa community has shown relative openness to interaction with Westerners. See Brooks 1992, and Haberman 1993, on a 1930’s case of the community, after much deliberation, allowing a Westerner, Ronald Nixon, to receive initiation from one of their members and thus enter the temple. I am also studying this particular temple for the opportunity it affords to build on a small body of previous scholarship focused upon it. The late Allan Shapiro deserves credit for pioneering the field (1979) while, as mentioned in my thesis Introduction, Margaret Case’s recent book *Seeing Krishna: The Religious World of a Brahman Family in Vrindaban* serves as a valuable departure point into further exploration.

## II.1 ĀGAMIC ANCHORING, RASIKA REVELATION: THE APPEARANCE OF RĀDHĀRAMAṆA

### II.1.1. The Temple-Founding Narrative

In stark contrast to the *prāṇa-pratiṣṭha* rite for image establishment described in HBV is the origination story of Kṛṣṇa's image as Rādhāramaṇa-lāla, the Dearly Beloved of Rādhā, said to have appeared supernaturally and quite suddenly from a sacred śālagrāma stone.<sup>8</sup> I will examine this narrative in some detail, showing how it serves as a vehicle for highlighting the link in the "chain of divinity" between exemplary worshipper and worshipped image;<sup>9</sup> for expressing Rādhāramaṇa's uniqueness and multiple identity; and for grounding the community in what it considers to be authentic *bhakti* tradition.<sup>10</sup>

The basic story is this. As a child Gopāla Bhaṭṭa meets Caitanya in south India (during the latter's tour of 1510-11) and becomes his follower; later he joins Rūpa and Sanātana, the two senior followers of Caitanya, in Vrindavan. There, on Caitanya's posthumous order (received in a dream), he worships Kṛṣṇa in śālagrāma stones, one of which, one night, is miraculously transformed into the petite (ca. eleven inch tall) *mūrti* seen today and known as Rādhāramaṇa.

The main textual source for this account appears to be the eighteenth century Bengali work *Bhaktiratnākara* (The Jewel Treasure-trove of Devotion), a lengthy work penned by Narahari Cakravartī (18<sup>th</sup> c.) that combines several biographies of first- and second-generation celebrities in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava community.<sup>11</sup>Nara-

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<sup>8</sup> Rao describes śālagrāma stones in his *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (Vol. I, 9-11): "A śālagrāma is generally a flintified ammonite shell, which is river worn and thus rounded and beautifully polished. The river Gaṇḍaki, which is one of well-known tributaries of the Ganges, is famous for its deposits of śālagrāmas" (quoted from Shapiro 1979: 57-8). He goes on to explain how they are considered "representative of Viṣṇu" in his various aspects and *avatāras*, depending on colour and markings. See Shapiro 1987 for a thorough discussion on the śālagrāma cult.

<sup>9</sup> I am borrowing Norman Cutler's expression, "chain of divinity," which he uses to highlight the notion of a "chain reaction" or transfer and spread of divinity from one embodiment or locus of divinity to another (Waghorne and Cutler 1996: 165-166).

<sup>10</sup> A contestive version of this story is recounted among followers of Vallabha which, predictably, credits Vallabha with holding the decisive role in Rādhāramaṇa's appearance (Shyamdas, 2001). The historicity of both versions is beyond validation, but our concern here is with narrative as part of the present temple community's self-understanding (see Stewart, Introduction).

<sup>11</sup> I suspect Narahari based his account on something written earlier, but have yet to locate earlier sources. Gaurakṛṣṇa Goswami (see fn. [20]) frequently cites Gopāl Kavi's *Gopālabhaṭṭacarita* (presently being edited and published by Dr. N. C. Bansal with the Vrindavan Research Academy), but I have as yet not seen this text or learned of its presumed date. One

hari devotes some 250 verse couplets scattered over several chapters to Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, compensating for Kṛṣṇadāsa's near-silence about him in Caitanya-caritāmṛta and establishing him as a key member of the nascent Caitanya Vaiṣṇava community.<sup>12</sup>

Typical of early modern sacred biographies of exemplary figures associated with Hindu orthodoxy, Narahari's work first establishes Gopāla's spiritual pedigree. The latter is a recipient of Caitanya's special attention and blessings and guru of Śrīnivāsa, one of the most prominent figures in the BhR (1.67-68).<sup>13</sup> Narahari then establishes Gopāla's brahmanical family pedigree, identifying him as the son of Venkata Bhaṭṭa, a priest of the Śrīraṅgam temple and "distinguished brahmin scholar of all *śāstra*" (1.82). Narahari reminds his readers of the description of Caitanya's south Indian tour in CC, then pictures the young Gopāla's handsome appearance and ecstatic emotional attraction to this special guest of his father (1.86-99).<sup>14</sup> Next we learn of the young Gopāla's spiritual acumen in recognising Caitanya's identity as Kṛṣṇa. He privately laments his misfortune in having missed the Navadvīpa *līlā* of his new master, who favours the boy with a vision of him first as Kṛṣṇa and then as the golden-complexioned Gaurāṅga (the latter as Caitanya appeared to the residents of Navadvīpa prior to accepting the renounced order) (1.101-19).<sup>15</sup>

This initial encounter with Caitanya sets the themes of meeting, separation, and transformation that structure the rest of the account, distantly echoing the BhP's

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could compare Narahari's account also to the one in the *Bhaktamāl* of Nābhadās and its commentary of Priyādās, a well-known early work of Vaiṣṇava hagiography.

<sup>12</sup> Kṛṣṇadāsa mentions Gopāla Bhaṭṭa in all of six verses in his Caitanya-caritāmṛta: four times he includes him in lists of the six Vrindavan Gosvāmīs to whom he offers respects (1.1.36; 1.9.4; 3.1.3; and 3.11.9); in 1.10.105 he is listed as a "most exalted branch (*eka śākhā sarvottama*) of the Caitanya "tree" of associates; and in 2.18.49 he is listed among devotees accompanying Rūpa at one time to Mathurā. Narahari puzzles over Kṛṣṇadāsa's near-silence over Gopāla, concluding that the latter must have requested not to be mentioned in the work out of humility (1.222-23). Unlike other biographies of Caitanya, CC describes Caitanya's south India tour, including his visit to Śrīraṅgam and residing with the temple priest Venkata Bhaṭṭa (CC 2.9.82-165). But no mention is made of Gopāla, who according to BhR was a son of Venkata.

<sup>13</sup> See McDaniell, Ch. 6, and Snell 1994. See also Prentiss, 7, on south Indian proliferation of biographical literature that represents saints as "primary embodiments of *bhakti*," and *ibid.*, 108-9, on linking sacred images with stories of *bhaktas*.

<sup>14</sup> The description of appearance is rather formulaic and could easily pass for a Pauranic description of a divinity, or of Viṣṇu. The ideal worshipper of Viṣṇu has outward as well as internal qualifications, underscoring his charismatic nature. See also HBV Ch. 1, 2, and 19. See Coburn (1984: 70-71) on "poetic formulas" as constant re-creations of tradition, and Snell (1994) on patterns in Indian hagiography.

<sup>15</sup> Navadvīpa, north of present day Kolkata, was Caitanya's birthplace.

Rāsa-lilā-*pañcādhyāya*. Caitanya’s departure from Śrīraṅgam throws Gopāla and his family members into lamentation and renders the town almost vacant after crowds that had flocked to see Caitanya disperse. Gopāla lives in anticipation of meeting Caitanya again, and of meeting his associates in Vrindavan (1.120-43). Meanwhile he becomes a learned, poetic, and musically talented Vaiṣṇava preacher while conscientiously looking after his parents (1.144-59). Eventually arriving in Vrindavan (his satisfied parents having given their blessings for his departure prior to their own demise), Gopāla meets Rūpa and Sanātana, fellow missionaries far removed from the Master’s headquarters in Purī (1.165). Gopāla having arrived in Vrindavan, he and the other Gosvāmīs receive confirmation of Caitanya’s blessings for their missionary work through a messenger (1.184-96).<sup>16</sup>

Narahari describes Rādhāramaṇa’s appearance in a mere four verses (BhR 4.315-319), telling only that (1) Caitanya posthumously tells Gopāla (presumably in a dream) that he will see Lord Hari in a śālagrāma stone; (2) Rūpa confirms Caitanya’s statement to Gopāla, saying it is now Govinda’s desire that Gopāla perform “separate worship” (*prthak-sevā*);<sup>17</sup> and (3) the Lord appears “after a few days” from the śālagrāma stone, as predicted. Narahari then extolls Rādhāramaṇa as having a face, chest, and feet “identical” in appearance to those of (respectively) Gopīnātha, Govinda, and Madana-mohana—the three *mūrtis* then worshipped by the Vrindavan Gosvāmīs.<sup>18</sup> All the Gosvāmīs are pleased to see Gopāla’s devoted worship of Rādhāramaṇa and witness the *mūrti*’s formal consecration on the following full-moon day, Vaiśākha-pūrnimā (4.320-325).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> According to BhR, Caitanya sent some of his personal garments to his followers in Vrindāvana as a gesture of blessing (1.193-95). The text gives no indication the gifts were meant exclusively for Gopāla. Yet the present-day Rādhāramaṇa Goswamis claim he sent cloth and his personal wooden seat specifically to Gopāla Bhaṭṭa as a sign of special blessing (and both are still preserved and worshipped in the temple), indicating investiture of powers of succession only in him and his followers.

<sup>17</sup> Govindadeva, the *mūrti* discovered by Rūpa possibly in 1534, was presumably receiving worship by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa up to the time of this instruction from Caitanya. One might suspect a rift between Gopāla and Rūpa leading to Gopāla’s establishing worship separate from Rūpa’s and the other Goswamis’, but I know of no specific evidence for this. Narahari assures that Rūpa spoke affectionately to Gopāla (4.317), and in verse 332 (quoting one Manohar Rai) says that “Gopāla’s eagerness increased,” such that he recognised this new arrangement to be the Lord’s desire.

<sup>18</sup> In the CC (1.1.15-17, 19), Kṛṣṇadāsa eulogizes these three *mūrtis* as the main images of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas of Vrindavan.

<sup>19</sup> Narahari then quotes three Sanskrit verses from “*Sādhanadīpikā*”, apparently a different work from the better-known one of Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, as a proof-text on the appearance of Rādhāramaṇa.

Rādhāramaṇa's appearance (as well as other episodes of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's life story) receives considerable elaboration in later writings. These elaborations portray Gopāla Bhaṭṭa more explicitly as the Rādhāramaṇa community's exemplary worshipper, bringing to life Caitanya Vaiṣṇava ideals expressed in BhP, CC, and HBV while reinforcing the community's legitimacy as a centre of orthodox Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. The Hindi work *Śrī Gopālabhaṭṭa Gosvāmī* of Gaurakṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, a present-day retired Rādhāramaṇa priest, is a comprehensive source for such elaborations.<sup>20</sup>

According to this account, after he had obtained śālagrāma stones from Nepal and returned to Vrindavan (with a new disciple, Gopīnātha, met in the course of his travels), Gopāla participates in the worship of Madana-mohana, Govinda, and Gopīnātha.<sup>21</sup> The other Goswamis appreciate Gopāla's expert and devotionally executed *śṛṅgāra-sevā*—dressing and ornamenting the images—while Gopāla privately longs for a full *darśanam* of those same images in the śālagrāma stones to which he also offers daily worship. All the while Gopāla suffers from the absence of Caitanya. His hopes of meeting him once again in person had long before been dashed when the message from Caitanya in Purī had arrived, indicating his master's imminent demise. And after Caitanya's departure, although he had promised that he would appear to Gopāla in the sacred śālagrāma stone, this had not yet transpired.

In Gopāla's anguish of separation he compares his plight to that of the *gopīs* in their disappointment upon being turned away by Kṛṣṇa in the forest prior to the Rāsa Dance (according to BhP 10.29.18-28); alternately he compares himself to Ajāmila, a fallen brahmin described in BhP (6.1-3); or he beseeches Yamunādevī and Vṛndādevī, respectively the river and forest goddesses of Vrindavan, for their help. Gopāla's overwrought condition comes to a head on the day for observing the Nṛsimha *avatāra*'s appearance (in 1542), to be observed at dusk by performing ablu-

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<sup>20</sup> This book is quite hagiographical in character, probably with due embellishment beyond the author's sources. Still, occasionally the work gives sources, including Narahari's *Bhaktiratnākara*, *Premavilāsa*, and *Śrī Gopālabhaṭṭacarita* of Gopāl Kavi.

Gaurakṛṣṇa Gosvāmī also refers to local legend: *janśruti ke anusāra*—"according to what is heard among the people" (pp. 90-100). Shapiro (1979: 9) reports a second version of the story of Rādhāramaṇa's appearance current in Vrindavan: "The popular version tells that a certain king came to Vrindaban and determined to donate various items of cloth or ornaments to the images which were being worshipped there. Gopāl Bhaṭṭ had a great desire to be able to adorn Kṛṣṇa (others say it was Kṛṣṇa who had a great desire to be adorned), and from the intensity of this desire, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā (united in one form or image) appeared from the *śālagrām* and received the largesse of the monarch."

<sup>21</sup> This last image is not to be confused with Gopāla's disciple, of the same name.

tion of a śālagrāma stone as a *mūrti* of the half-man, half-lion form of the Lord.<sup>22</sup> At that time, while concentrating on the form of Viṣṇu as Nṛsimha and addressing him by mantra, he thinks of the Lord's form in the stone and exclaims (citing BhP 7.8.17), "This very day the Lord appeared before Prahlāda, fulfilling the latter's statement that he can appear anywhere by appearing from a stone pillar. Can he not similarly appear again in his extraordinary form from my śālagrāma?" (93). Gopāla's disciple Gopīnātha urges his guru to proceed with the bathing ceremony, but Gopāla is distracted to the point of fainting. Eventually he performs the *abhiṣeka*, but after its completion he is awarded a vision of the Lord as Ghanaśyāma, Kṛṣṇa, the dark and beautiful divine Cowherd of Vrindavan, within the stone. Now emotions overwhelm him as never before, spilling forth as solicitous pleas and fainting spells.

The denouement (or "charismatic moment") occurs the next morning, when the Lord calls the now sleeping Gopāla to awaken and encounter him in the form Gopāla has so longed to behold. After awakening and bathing, Gopāla finds in the basket holding the śālagrāma stones a "bluish shining" image from which spread "countless rays of light" (95). Gopāla is confounded by what he sees. It is Gopīnātha, the disciple, who provides the devotional explanation of the metamorphosis: "Gurudeva, this is none but a self-manifesting blue lotus from your mind-lake (*mānas sarovara*) filled with the constant flowing tears from your exalted desire" (95). The magnetic force of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's *bhakti* had become irresistible to its Object, who then appears directly out of the śālagrāma stone (once again confirming Prahlāda's statement that the Lord can appear anywhere). It is delicately formed yet consists of the same (brittle, humanly uncarveable) material as the śālagrāma from whence it had apparently come.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The Nṛsimha *avatāra*, described in several Purāṇas, including the BhP, Seventh Book (see Soifer, *passim*), is worshipped as the protector of the devoted child Prahlāda from Prahlāda's demonic father Hiraṇyakaśipu. Nṛsimhāvatāra assumes a form as half-man, half-lion as a means to uphold a benediction granted by Brahmā that Hiraṇyakaśipu could be killed neither by man nor beast.

<sup>23</sup> Rādhāramaṇa goswamis point to two reasons for accepting Rādhāramaṇa as self-manifest from śālagrāma. One is that on the image's back is an imprint of what could only be a śālagrāma stone, claimed to be the one initially worshipped by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa from which the image appeared. Unfortunately none but Rādhāramaṇa goswamis have access to view the image's back, nor are any photographs available of his back. Second, śālagrāma stones are uncarveable, being too brittle (Case 1995: 46). Shapiro (1987: 15-18) questions the supposed uncarvability of śālagrāma stones, noting his own observance of two small images clearly carved from śālagrāmas at the Devasthanam Museum of Tirupati/Tirumalai (South India), and a photograph of an image of Rāma carved from a śālagrāma in Rao, 1993 [1914]: plate A, facing p. 11. As Shapiro rightly notes (15), to explain Rādhāramaṇa's appearance as

The privacy of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's fulfilled desire for *darśanam* of the Lord yields immediately to the newsworthy public fact that a *svayam-vyakta mūrti* of Kṛṣṇa has suddenly appeared in Vrindavan. In Gaurakṛṣṇa Gosvāmī's account the Vaiṣṇava community of Vrindavan is thrilled and only too willing to acknowledge that Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's "years of practice have today become complete" (95) and to gather all requisites for a fittingly grand installation ceremony for the *ṭhākura* (divinity), formally welcoming him among the—as yet few—already present Kṛṣṇa images and growing community of Kṛṣṇa *bhaktas*.<sup>24</sup>

### II.1.2 Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, Exemplary Worshipper

In these accounts, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's instrumental role in the appearance of Rādhāramaṇa is considered crucial and renders him nearly equal status with his Object of worship. Before looking more closely at the Rādhāramaṇa image's multiple significations, let us view further the account of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa as Rādhāramaṇa's principal servant. What we learn of him in the narrative of Rādhāramaṇa's appearance highlights a twofold characterisation, with the two potentially oppositional elements meant to be understood as complementary. On the one side is Gopāla's brahmanical-Vaiṣṇava background which signals a grounding in scriptural knowledge and ritually oriented lifestyle. It is that aspect of his character which indicates conservation of established social reality, the ranked class system so constitutive of the brahmanical cosmological axiom. That he was associated with the Śrīraṅgam temple suggests religious orthodoxy and orthopraxy, with their attendant connotations of propriety and stability.<sup>25</sup> It also lends him authority as priest for a famous deity (Raṅganātha) and temple of the South, in turn conveying prestige to Rādhāramaṇa as an image of similar stature as Raṅganātha. As the son of a priest, he lives atop the social hierarchy of

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the result of human agency by carving would be completely unacceptable to adherents of the cult. He further notes in this connection (1979: 10), "Miracles occur in every religion, and they probably do so for some good purpose, i.e., to make a point. In the case of the appearance of Rādhāramaṇa, the point being emphasized is the effectiveness of *bhakti* or devotion as a religious practice."

<sup>24</sup> As we discussed in the previous chapter, HBV contains an elaborate image installation procedure. Yet even though it must have already been completed by this time, Rūpa was requested to write a manual expressly for this occasion, *Kṛṣṇajanmatīthividhi*. Tradition says that he completed the work in one day so that the ceremony could be immediately performed for Rādhāramaṇa (interview, G. C. Ghosh, 18-9-01).

<sup>25</sup> I am intentionally over-simplifying what is doubtless a complex situation at Śrīraṅgam to sketch what, in my view, was and is a prevailing attitude among Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas regarding Śrīvaiṣṇavism in general.

his time and locale, and his vocation is well defined as ritualist, teacher, and eventually as guru. But beyond his brahmanical status, he is also a *dharma*-upholding Vaiṣṇava: Gopāla's Śrīraṅgam affiliation reminds us of the Śrīvaiṣṇava sect's emphasis on the worship of Śrī or Lakṣmīdevī with Nārāyaṇa, the divine exemplary married couple celebrated and worshipped as maintainers of cosmic and social order, *dharma*. Moreover, as a worshipper of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Gopāla is presumably favoured by them, who are celebrated by Śrīvaiṣṇavas as the proof of divine accessibility.

The other aspect of Gopāla's character is his "liminality" (Grimes: 264-66, citing Victor Turner), characterised by the ecstatic devotional emotionalism—blended with world-renunciation—introduced by Śrī Caitanya. Caitanya's joking admonishment of Gopāla's father and uncle over their well-meant but misdirected devotion to Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa (described in CC 2.9.110-62) is read by Gopāla as an invitation to enter the socially unsettling and emotionally intense, but devotionally superior, world of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship.<sup>26</sup> His rejection of household life (after due fulfillment of basic filial duties); his wanderings to Vrindavan and Nepal; the intensity of his longings for Caitanya's company; his dreams, prayers, and visions—these are marks of a newly won freedom from the constraints of brahmanical orthodoxy and orthopraxy. They serve to portray the Rādhāramaṇa temple's founder as having progressed beyond pious convention to become an embodiment of unbounded devotion to the divine couple of Vrindavan.

That these two streams coursing through Gopāla's life narrative converge and blend is an important theme, underscored by allusions to exemplary figures and key episodes in the BhP and CC. Gopāla is portrayed as a devoted and skilled performer of worship rituals as enunciated by Kṛṣṇa in BhP 11.27. Yet his devotion far exceeds duty as he longs for the Lord's appearance on the day for celebrating Nṛsiṃha's appearance. The occasion evokes comparison of Gopāla with Prahlāda, the revered Viṣṇu *bhakta* of the BhP (but also of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, the preferred *Purāṇa* of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas) (Matchett 2001: 178). But more to the point for Caitanyaites is the Rāsa-līlā parallel. Comparing Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's plight in failing to meet Caitanya with that of the *gopīs* seemingly rejected by Kṛṣṇa allows an echoing of the "focal point"

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<sup>26</sup> From a Caitanyaite perspective the worship of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa is dominated by the sense of majesty (*aiśvarya-jñāna*), whereas the worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is dominated by intimacy and sweetness (*mādhurya*). The latter is held to be superior due to the devotee's greater proximity to the Lord, wherein all sense of majesty is set aside. See chapter one, sections 1.2.1.4, 1.2.2.1, 1.2.2.2.

of the BhP drama of divine separation and meeting. Appropriately, the tradition considers him to be one of the *mañjarīs* (pre-pubescent female assistants to the *gopīs*) in his spiritual identity.<sup>27</sup> Considering that identity as his ontologically superior and foundational persona, for Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas it could suggest that his distracted condition prior to Rādhāramaṇa's appearance was of a similar calibre as the extreme ecstatic-emotional states said to have been exhibited by Caitanya in his final years.<sup>28</sup> Nor would it be a wonder that Gopāla had immediately comprehended Caitanya's inner identity as Kṛṣṇa upon their first meeting. By the same reasoning, with such innate qualification it would be only appropriate that Caitanya had chosen him to join Rūpa and Sanātana (each themselves understood to be *mañjarīs* in their spiritual personae) in revitalising Kṛṣṇa devotionalism in Vraja.<sup>29</sup>

That Gopāla Bhaṭṭa is especially blessed by Caitanya and Rādhāramaṇa to offer service to the Rādhāramaṇa image is expressed in these lines excerpted from a verse collection known as *Caitanya Padāvalī*, sung annually on the occasion of Rādhāramaṇa's appearance celebration.<sup>30</sup>

*Jai! Victory to beloved, blossom-handed Śrī Gopāl Bhaṭṭ,  
a bee at the honey of lord Kṛṣṇacaitanya's lotus feet.  
In Śrī Vrindaban's groves and the bewitching place of the rās dance  
he is fortunate to be able to serve Rādhāramaṇ;  
The fortunate one served Rādhāramaṇ, nurturing him with the  
feelings of a gopī.  
By a branch from the root of supreme bliss, the devotee's  
desire was fulfilled:  
He drinks the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's beauty night and day  
through unblinking eyes that never wander.*

Here we get a picture of an exemplary *bhakta* whose life has attained perfection in regulated practice of service to his Lord, but who is ultimately identified as and

<sup>27</sup> See BhR (4.339) on Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's identity as either Anaṅga- or Guṇa-mañjarī; *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* (v. 184) preferences Anaṅga-mañjarī, adding that "some say that Gopāla Bhaṭṭa was Guṇa-mañjarī" (Kuśakratha dāsa: 112) For a discussion of the importance of the *mañjarī* conceit in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, see Haberman 1988: 108-14.

<sup>28</sup> See CC 3.14-19.

<sup>29</sup> The Bengali work *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* of Kavi Karṇapūra (b. 1526) identifies the several followers of Caitanya in their *svarūpa* (spiritual personae) as associates of Kṛṣṇa either in or outside Vrindavan. Therein (verse 180) Rūpa Gosvāmī is identified as Rūpa-mañjarī; Sanātana Gosvāmī (181-2) is two simultaneous personae, namely Rati-mañjarī (also called Lavaṅgā-mañjarī) and Sanātana-kumāra (one of the four celibate sons of Brahmā) (Kuśakratha dāsa: 110-11).

<sup>30</sup> Shapiro 1979: 1; 34. This is section V. of the first part from the *badhāi* verses of the *pra-gaṭotsav*, translated from Brajbhāṣā by Shapiro, from *Caitanya Padāvalī* (Jaipur: Gaiṇdīlāl, Dāmodardās, and Viśveśvarnāth Tāṭivālā, samvat 2024 [1967]), pp. 26-49.

absorbed in a spiritual female identity, through which sensory satisfaction is achieved in the capacity to fully perceive Kṛṣṇa's beauty. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa is presented as being simultaneously a *sādhaka* (practitioner, aspirant after spiritual perfection) and an eternally perfect soul, a *pārṣada* (companion) of Kṛṣṇa, and therefore an "exemplary model" or "paradigmatic individual" (Haberman 1988: 60) for practitioners of *bhakti*.

Considering Gopāla Bhaṭṭa from the perspective of charismatic authority in light of this double identity shows the complexity of his role as temple founder. As the ideal *sādhaka*, observing and writing *vidhi* texts drawn from his brahmanical Vaiṣṇava background, Gopāla's charisma could be seen as largely *institutional*. Yet he also represents the opposite end of Max Weber's famous charismatic spectrum. As the intensely emotional Kṛṣṇa-*pārṣada* evoking by miraculous means the Rādhāramaṇa image, Gopāla's charisma could be seen as that of the "magician," the person working outside or peripheral to the institution (Broo 2003a: 5-6, citing Max Weber).<sup>31</sup> But the matter of charisma becomes even more complex: Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's charisma is shared charisma, between himself and his worshippable Lord Rādhāramaṇa. And the latter's identity, as understood by his priests and worshippers, is not at all simple, as we shall see presently.

### II.1.3 Rādhāramaṇa as Visual Theology<sup>32</sup>

In terms of narrative progress, by Rādhāramaṇa's self-manifestation Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's "problem" was solved. No longer need he suffer the pangs of separation from his beloved Kṛṣṇa nor from his master Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The object of his meditations and worship, who had previously not been satisfactorily manifest as śālagrāma stones and as *mūrtis* worshipped by other Gosvāmīs, had come to him in the free-standing *tribhaṅgī* form favoured by the followers of Caitanya and other Vaiṣṇavas of Vrindavan.<sup>33</sup> Parallel with Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's inner transformation, or unfold-

<sup>31</sup> Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (London: Methuen, 1965), 28-30.

<sup>32</sup> I am borrowing the expression "visual theology" from Diana Eck (41), who in turn cites Anand Coomaraswamy's essay, "The Dance of Śiva."

<sup>33</sup> The *mūrtis* worshipped by the other Gosvāmīs were also in the *tribhaṅgī* stance. The Nimbarkis, Rādhāvallabhis, followers of Svāmī Haridās, and to some extent the followers of Valabha, all have favoured this form. Shapiro, citing Swami Bhakti Hṛdaya Bon, writes, "Kṛṣṇa is never static: he is eternally new (*nava*) because his beauteous attraction ever increases as the devotee's relish for his beauty grows but, as this is incomprehensible to puny human understanding, we always picture him in this 'classic' *tribhaṅgī* pose" (Shapiro 1979: 103). To

ing of his spiritual identity as intimate associate of Kṛṣṇa, was Kṛṣṇa's transformation from an aniconic śālagrāma stone to an iconic image. As the conclusion of Rādhāramaṇa's appearance narrative, this double transformation is significant for the Rādhāramaṇa community as its own point of *beginning*, and as the beginning of the community's ongoing ritual life in service to Rādhāramaṇa. Yet that ongoing ritual life is equally sustained by conviction of ongoing divine presence and grace embodied in Rādhāramaṇa. This conviction is in turn supported by several implications readable from this appearance event and from the multiple identities attributed to Rādhāramaṇa, each "connotation" related to the others to produce a complex of meanings that can be plotted onto the horizontal dimension of our three-dimensional space of liturgical order. With the liturgical order scheme in mind we can consider some implications of Rādhāramaṇa's appearance from a śālagrāma stone, followed by implications of his multiple identity as Rādhāramaṇa.

By appearing from a śālagrāma stone there are six significant implications or theological "messages." First, Rādhāramaṇa is associated with an object of worship considered worshipable as Viṣṇu without any preliminary rituals of invocation (*āvāhana*) or, after completion of worship, of dismissal (*visarjana*) (HBV 5.438-39; Shapiro 1987: 22). Verses quoted in HBV suggest, perhaps for this reason, that śālagrāma is the best form of all types of images to be worshipped (HBV 5.439). That Rādhāramaṇa appears from a śālagrāma indicates a ranking equal to śālagrāma for purposes of ritual worship, and that therefore the procedures for his worship should reflect this connection.

Second, the śālagrāma stone's aniconicity counterposed with Rādhāramaṇa's iconicity suggests a sustained creative tension between conceptions of ultimate attributeless (*nirguṇa*) and ultimate attributeful (*saguṇa*) divinity. While *saguṇa* divinity is affirmed (such that Gopāla Bhaṭṭa is relieved of his torturous condition of dissatisfaction), *nirguṇa* divinity (embodied in śālagrāma stones) is *not* rejected, even if surpassed. Third, śālagrāma's sacrality is indeed surpassed by the visible attractive and publicly more accessible form of Rādhāramaṇa,<sup>34</sup> but nonetheless, fourth, the

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my knowledge this form is not included in Pāñcarātrika iconographic prescriptions. It might be compared to certain ancient *yakṣa* sculptures, and has a striking resemblance to the famous Natarāja form of Śiva.

<sup>34</sup> This theme is echoed narratively in the *Caitanya-bhāgavata* of Vṛndāvanadāsa (Ādikhaṇḍa 5). While Caitanya was a small, mischievous boy, a brāhmaṇa mendicant guest receives conscientious hospitality by his parents, only to have their efforts utterly spoiled twice

śālagrāma stone is not thereby replaced; rather, it can be appreciated and worshipped as the *kuñja*, the Vrindavan bower location of the divine couple's most intimate *līlā*.<sup>35</sup>

A fifth significance of the śālagrāma stone/Rādhāramaṇa connection has to do with the former lending itself to private, individual worship, performed mainly in the home (Narayanan 1996: 58-59). By Rādhāramaṇa appearing from a śālagrāma stone he is affirming the domestic sphere of the householder while entering into the sphere of public viewing and worship fitting for a pilgrimage centre. Finally, the Rādhāramaṇa/śālagrāma connection might be viewed as a “commentary” on, or a “dialogue” with (Shrivatsa 1996: 275-76) the pan-Indian brahmanical ritual complex external to rural Vrindavan and partially represented and addressed by the HBV. As a symbol of “inter-religious dialogue,” the emergence of Rādhāramaṇa from śālagrāma represents an effort to balance and hold together the rule-governed, cosmologically hierarchical orientation of brahmanical practice and the Caitanyaite emotion-governed ethos of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* gaining prominence at that time in Vrindavan.<sup>36</sup> In other words, Rādhāramaṇa served to promote partnership between “great” and “little traditions” (Fuller 1992: 24-28) as part of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava institutionalisation process in Vrindavan.

If “dialogue” features in Rādhāramaṇa's origination narrative, it also features in his multiple identity. I have already noted Rādhāramaṇa's identification with the

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in the same evening by their naughty child: Each time the brāhmaṇa is about to complete the worship of his Kṛṣṇa image (a śālagrama stone) with an offering of rice, Nīmai (as Caitanya was known) pleases himself by barging into the room and stuffing the rice in his mouth. During the guest's third attempt to make a proper offering, Vṛndāvanadāsa informs us, Nīmai manifests his real identity as Kṛṣṇa before the good gentleman, astonishing him by his beauty and letting him know that he (Nīmai) is the very one to whom he has been offering such devotion in the form of the śālagrāma stone.

<sup>35</sup> This last association is expressed in song XIV of the *Pragatotsava*. Shapiro 1979: 43; 113, fn. 194.

<sup>36</sup> Other possible associations indicating chains of divinity, though more indirect, could be worth considering. Here are some examples. (1) The HBV (5.366) alludes to Vedic sacrificial imagery to illustrate Viṣṇu's presence in and manifestation from śālagrama stones: “Just as fire appears from wood by production of friction, so the all-pervading Lord Hari appears in śālagrāma.” (2) Purāṇic etiological narratives account for śālagrāma stone's origin as a curse imposed upon Viṣṇu by an angry Tulasīdevī. The metamorphosis motif of being released from the curse of becoming stone might be applied here (see Kumar: Ch. V.). (3) CC (1.13.69-71) credits the Śāntipur brahmin Advaita for winning Kṛṣṇa's compliance to appear as Caitanya through his entreaties and worship of a Kṛṣṇa image, traditionally thought to have been a śālagrāma stone. (4) Semi-parallel reversals of śālagrāma metamorphosis are several narratives of *bhaktas* entering into sacred images, including (according to some versions) Caitanya himself, either into the Jagannātha or the Totā-Gopinātha image in Purī. (5) In another sort of reversal, in Buddhist traditions sacred relics are sometimes placed within images as a means of imbuing the image with divinity (Sharf 1999).

main images worshipped by the Vrindavan Gosvāmīs. Rādhāramaṇa should be seen, BhR suggests (4.321), as not just one Kṛṣṇa but as having the best features of three—Madana-mohana, Govinda, and Gopīnātha. Embodying all three images signals Rādhāramaṇa’s preemptive role as the aggregate and summit of an increasing number of temple images of Kṛṣṇa in Vrindavan. This “inclusivism” would additionally solve the problem that all three founding images were eventually removed elsewhere, making them inaccessible to Vrindavan residents.<sup>37</sup>

A third “dialogue” takes place with worship of female deities, or Śaktism in its varied expressions, in our present context a particular instance of a centuries-long development of the importance of the divine feminine principle in Indian iconography, ritual, and narrative (Hawley and Wulff 1996: 2-6). In Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, as we have noted in the previous chapter, Rādhā’s position as the supreme consort of Kṛṣṇa and his perfect worshipper is extensively explored by Caitanya and his followers. Considering Caitanya’s identity as the combined form of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, it is not surprising that Rādhāramaṇa is identified as not only Kṛṣṇa but also as Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. This is also indicated by the name “Rādhāramaṇa,” as the twentieth-century Vaiṣṇava ascetic Rāmadās Bāba of Pathbari has written:

*Understand deep in your heart  
that this image is not of Krishna alone.  
In the name is the full identity, and it is not Krishna  
alone therefore Radharaman is the name*

.....  
*When Radha loves and dallies with Krishna—  
the couple is called Radharaman.  
And that inseparable couple—Krishna inside, covered by  
Radha—chants constantly the name Radharaman.  
Heart to heart, Radharaman is surely Shri Chaitanya—  
Hence, veiled is the deity of Radha beside him.*

*Indeed, no separate deity is needed  
as Krishna is inseparable from her.  
The inseparable couple is Shri Chaitanya,  
who has taken the form of Radharaman.  
Gopal Bhatt’s life—became Radharaman. (Shrivatsa Goswami 2001: 68-69)<sup>38</sup>*

<sup>37</sup> That Rādhāramaṇa is a self-manifest image is crucial to the Rādhāramaṇa community’s sense of exceptionality. Certainly Madana-mohana, Govindadeva, and Gopīnātha were each direct manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, but Rādhāramaṇa had upstaged all three. Not only had he exhibited the best in the bodily features of his three counterparts, but his image was not the product of any human artistry.

<sup>38</sup> Song translated from Brajabhāṣā by Shrivatsa Goswami.

As this song suggests, Rādhāramaṇa as the combined form of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa renders a separate image of Rādhā superfluous.<sup>39</sup> With Rādhāramaṇa her presence is more implied than given physical form.<sup>40</sup> The lack of a separate Rādhā image could be taken as a statement of Rādhā's ontological subordination to Kṛṣṇa, were it not for the fact that Rādhā is considered to be the presiding deity of Vrindavan. The dialectic of divine gender is rather kept unresolved, allowing for the kind of creative solutions we find in the person of Caitanya, said to be Kṛṣṇa appearing in the *bhāva* (mood) of Rādhā (CC 1.1.5). Indeed, creative solutions do not stop there. According to one Vrindavan “theory” Rādhāramaṇa is the *reverse* of Caitanya: He is Rādhā appearing as Kṛṣṇa (Huberman 1992: 343-45)!

What all these “dialogues” suggest is a sense of fluidity in Rādhāramaṇa's identity giving place for varied moods and expressions of devotion from his *bhaktas*. This fluidity is underscored by the soft contours of the Rādhāramaṇa image, countering the hardness of the stone material. He is Kṛṣṇa, but also Rādhā; and as both combined he is Caitanya, whose life embodied the constant ebb and flow of intense spiritual emotion.<sup>41</sup>

Rādhāramaṇa's presence also commemorates Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's sense of Caitanya's absence, in this way suggesting non-presence. Thus Rādhāramaṇa becomes an embodiment of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava metaphysical discourse wherein ontological identity and difference of the world and *brahman* converge and complement each other; the cosmologically axiomatic corollary—that the devotional desire of a *bhakta* can prevail over the apparent limitations of matter—is thereby seen as confirmed. Indeed, for Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas, Kṛṣṇa's act of self-manifestation is an appropriate demonstration of his ontological identity as Lord of all (*parameśvara*) and ul-

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<sup>39</sup> Still, as in two other temples of Vrindavan (Bankebihārī and Rādhāvallabha), Rādhā is represented by a *gaddī* (throne or cushion), and her service is *gaddī-sevā* (she appears as a *sārī* draped with ornaments propped over a gold plate, or *yantra*, inscribed with her name—*nāma-sevā*). Each of the other main Kṛṣṇa images in Vrindavan would eventually be accompanied by an image of Rādhā.

<sup>40</sup> In his book *Gaurakṛṣṇa* Gosvāmī gives several reasons why Rādhā is not manifest in a separate image, the final and conclusive one being Rādhāramaṇa's express preference to Gopāla Bhaṭṭa in a dream (*Gaurakṛṣṇa* Gosvāmī: Appendix, 17-20).

<sup>41</sup> The multiplicity of identities extends even further: Having manifest from a *śālagrāma* stone identified as Kṛṣṇa in his form and pastime as Dāmodara, Rādhāramaṇa is therefore also Dāmodara; as the fulfillment of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's desire, he represents Gopāla Bhaṭṭa. Moreover, present-day Rādhāramaṇa Goswamis will say that he is Jagannātha, the image of Kṛṣṇa worshipped by Caitanya in Purī (Interview with Bāṭe Kṛṣṇa Goswami, September 2001). With each of these identities come additional associations.

timate cause (*sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*), the creator and sustainer of natural laws who is at liberty to supersede those laws for his purposes (CC 1.2.107; 2.8.137, quoting *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.1). And his primary purpose is to confirm the greatness of *bhakti*, the life of the softened heart of the *bhakta*, wherein relationship is the highest reality.<sup>42</sup>

As a narrative account of actualised Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, Rādhāramaṇa's appearance story highlights the divine-human relationship of love as the ontologically central category of ultimate reality. Contrasting the classical paths to cultivate and experience *ānanda* (bliss)—those of knowledge (*jñāna*) and deeds (*karma*) with the way of devotion (*bhakti*), Margaret Case (citing Shrivatsa Goswami) notes,

The way of devotion (*bhakti*) . . . takes as its reality the relationship between subject [the seeker] and object [of one's search, the truth of Being], and its goal is not liberation but full realization of this relationship (*ānanda*). The relationship can be conceived of as the *līlā* of Krishna, his divine play; the stories of Krishna's life in Vrindaban are vehicles for realizing the relationship of love between human and divine, which is the ultimate reality of human existence (Case 2000: 70).

For Caitanyaites, the “stories of Krishna's life” are episodes in the eternally unfolding meta-narrative of divine-human interaction, and Rādhāramaṇa's appearance is seen as one such episode, albeit a central one for the Rādhāramaṇa community. As divine response to Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's devotion, Rādhāramaṇa is his charismatic counterpart and hence “shares” Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's charisma.<sup>43</sup> But since for Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas all charisma, all attractive and authoritative power, emanates from Kṛṣṇa, as *bhagavān*, it is not surprising that Rādhāramaṇa becomes the charismatic centre of the Rādhāramaṇa community, with Gopāla Bhaṭṭa holding an important but secondary place.<sup>44</sup> By virtue of Rādhāramaṇa's presence, a felicitous expression of religious

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<sup>42</sup> See fn. 23, Shapiro's comment on miracles as confirmations of *bhakti*'s effectiveness.

<sup>43</sup> Heinrich von Stietencron, in proposing to count divine images among loci of charisma, admits to extending Weber's category. He hastens to add that he is justified in doing so because the images so counted are considered to possess divine agency only by virtue of ritual consecration, i.e. human agency. I am going one step further, then, since Rādhāramaṇa is considered *svayam vyakta*, self-manifest. Still, from a devotional perspective Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's desire for the image would certainly count as “human agency.” (von Stietencron: 25-26)

<sup>44</sup> Iconographically Gopāla Bhaṭṭa is represented only aniconically in the Rādhāramaṇa temple. In the inner sanctum he is represented by the wooden *āsana* sent by Caitanya. This is not directly visible except to the priests engaged in the sanctum. He is also represented by an aniconic cement mound in his tomb (*samādhi-mandira*, situated within the Rādhāramaṇa Gherā, or compound). This is draped daily with cloth and flower garlands, much as an iconic image would be dressed, as part of daily *sevā* (including food offerings and *āratis*) performed by resident Vaiṣṇava ascetics. This iconographically secondary place of the temples'

truth, the sequences of liturgical order comprising the entire span of time dimensions from each of the several daily services to the four-century-plus life of the temple as a whole will now unfold.

#### II.1.4 Embodied Community of Bhakti: Rādhāramaṇa Settles in Vrindavan

With the appearance of Rādhāramaṇa (as with the discovery, recovery, or acquisition of other images of Kṛṣṇa by the Vrindavan Goswamis), the object of worship has come to remain with his worshippers, in the place most sacred for Kṛṣṇa bhaktas, Vrindavan.<sup>45</sup> He constitutes an “embodiment of bhakti” affording the completeness of being and participation in divine activity that embodiment implies (Prentiss 1999). Many verses of the *Pragatotsav* express this sense of completeness and participation afforded by Rādhāramaṇa’s presence in Vrindavan, such as the following:

*The blessed realm, Vrindaban, is ours.  
The golden one and the dark one in one body is Mahāprabhu [Caitanya],  
who spreads pure devotion.  
Our personal God is Rādhāramaṇ, who delights in devotion,  
beloved child of Nanda.  
Our Goddess is the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu [Rādhā];  
she wears a red and blue cloth.  
Our guru and ācārya is Śrī Gopāl Bhaṭṭ, beloved of Rūp and Sanātan.  
The pilgrimages named Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa kuṇḍ, Saṅket, Barsana, Nandagaṅv,  
Govardhan—the best of mountains, and Śrī Jamunā, are dear  
as life to us.  
Let us repeat the names of Śrī Lalitā and the other sakhīs,  
and Rūp- and Guṇamañjarīs. (Shapiro 1979: 51, #XXI)*

Common “ownership” (*hamāra ho*) of the sacred persons and places listed suggests a sense of community centred in a particular locale (“our Vrindaban”—*śrī vṛndāvan dhām hamāro ho*) and focused on a particular image of Kṛṣṇa (“our personal God. ”—*ṭhākur iṣṭ śrī-Rādhāramaṇ*). It is a locale of devotional feeling, induced by the multiple associations arising from the recollection of these names and

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founder-saint might be contrasted with iconographic prominence of saints in south Indian Śiva bhakti tradition (see Prentiss 1999: 7). Conversely, it could be compared in form with the similarly aniconic Śiva-linga representation of Śiva’s presence throughout India.

<sup>45</sup> One may recall the discussion in chapter one on dissatisfaction of meeting Kṛṣṇa outside Vrindavan, in connection with the CC and Caitanya’s interactions with the Jagannātha image in Purī (section 1.2.2.3).

places, a world enclosed within the constant interplay of texts, devotees, and images, both physical and literary.

But Vrindavan is also located in the temporal world, functioning as a pilgrimage centre catering to practical as well as religious needs of pilgrims and residents. In this context of real-world contingencies the Rādhāramaṇa community has survived and thrived. The “embodiment of *bhakti*” has expanded physically, as initially a small temple building, then a larger one; patronage and property have increased over time; and worship practices and festivals have become set (Case 2000: 73-82). And over time there have been organisational adjustments and conscious decisions (“formal indices of prevailing conditions,” as Rappaport might identify them) felt to be necessary for preservation of the community and its central duty of maintaining Rādhāramaṇa’s worship.<sup>46</sup> From early on, crucial among these adjustments was the transferral of worship privilege (*adhikāra*) from *bhakta* ascetics to *bhakta* householders, a move not atypical for north Indian temples in early modern times.

To the present day Vaiṣṇava temples, small and large, are typically owned and administered by families that claim more or less direct descent from a founding ascetic’s householder disciple. Such is the case with the temples established by the three prominent Vrindavan followers of Caitanya, Rūpa, Sanātana, and their nephew Jīva (Entwistle: 177; Haynes: 82-131). Rādhāramaṇa temple follows the same system. The reasons for this are obvious enough. With their familial and social commitments householders lead lives conducive to the proper custodianship of temples, with their need for management of the practical and financial demands of daily and festival service. Indeed, appropriate activities for brahmin householders are the various priestly duties associated with divine/human mediation—worshipping a temple image, offering hospitality to pilgrims, providing scriptural instruction, and receiving donations for these services.<sup>47</sup> Ascetics, by contrast, are expected to be free of social obligations, hence inclined to itinerant, other-worldly lifestyles meant to demonstrate detachment from wealth and property. Ascetics’ ways are not conducive to maintaining temples and supplying comforts to temple deities. Perhaps with such considerations

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<sup>46</sup> Gaurakṛṣṇa Gosvāmī records some highlights of managerial development and change in his book *Śrī Gopālabhātta Gosvāmī*. Included are four “Pratijñā-pātras,” sets of decisions reached by the Rādhāramaṇa temple councils on four different occasions.

<sup>47</sup> To what extent the traditional disdain by orthodox brahmins upon brahmins engaging in temple worship (see von Stietencron 1977) in the sixteenth century Vraja area existed may be difficult to judge, but the sheer magnitude of HBV could suggest a felt need to justify temple worship to a wider Sanskrit-reading brahmin society.

in mind the renunciant Gopāla Bhaṭṭa is reported to have thought pragmatically, “Ascetics will not be able to perform Śrījī’s (Rādhāramaṇa’s) service. That burden shall be given to some pure householder (*sad-grahasthī*); only then, by dynastic succession, will his affectionate care (*lāḍ lādāyā*) be assured” (Gaurakṛṣṇa Gosvāmī: 109).

One is not to suppose that Gopāla Bhaṭṭa’s deliberations were independent of Rādhāramaṇa’s will. The former’s managerial concerns were prompted, the tradition tells us, by a dream in which Rādhāramaṇa complains about the austere lifestyle he is forced to accept under Gopāla Bhaṭṭa’s care: “Dry bread (*roṭī*) gets stuck in the throat. At least add a little salt. I have always eaten butter and rock candy. If nothing else, at least put a little raw sugar in my food. [And while we’re on the subject], how can the evening lamps be lit without ghee, oil, or cotton?” (ibid. 109). This account of divine “dissatisfaction” has parallels in other Indian temple literature: An ascetic’s largely meditative devotional practices yield little in the way of tangible basic comforts, not to speak of royal opulence, for the very tangible object of his worship.<sup>48</sup> In our present account, divine dissatisfaction mirrors human dissatisfaction (Gopāla Bhaṭṭa’s discontent with *śālagrāma* worship), thereby expanding the franchise of *mūrti-sevā* to a wider community. Rādhāramaṇa’s “dissatisfaction,” an impetus for expansion of *līlā* that seems contrary to Vedāntic notions of divine completeness and self-satisfaction, is seen by devotees as his grace, the expansive nature of which brings about his worshipful community. Both the charismatic divinity and the charismatic initial worshipper together are credited with setting in motion the process of institutionalisation that constitutes the temple organisation.

With the inception of temple organisation identified with divine will (and hence linked to the “ultimate sacred postulate” of Kṛṣṇa’s ultimacy, the next task is to secure temple worship continuity. Two principles come into play in this matter, what we may refer to as “digital” and “analogue” modes of action, change, and types of qualification or states of being operative within the logos of *bhakti* (Rappaport: 86-97).<sup>49</sup> The “digital” dimension refers to states or status determined as being either

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<sup>48</sup> An almost identical story of saltless bread is told in relation to Madana-mohana and Sanātana Gosvāmī (Kapoor 1997: 259). Also cf. CC 2.4.105ff., Mādhavendra’s task to fetch sandalwood for his Gopāla image, described below (II.2.3).

<sup>49</sup> Rappaport notes the binary character of much ritual occurrence: That one has participated in a particular rite, such as an initiation, establishes one as initiated, eliminating ambiguity about the state of the person in question. I am extending this beyond the ritual sphere to the

the case or not the case (one or zero, yes or no—the two possibilities in binary language). Examples in the Rādhāramaṇa context have to do with basic (biological and social) prerequisites for being a Rādhāramaṇa priest, namely possession of the right blood lineage (direct descent from Dāmodara Gosvāmī, the first householder disciple of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa); the right gender (male); and membership in the right spiritual lineage (the “Madhva-gauḍeśvara” sampradāya) through formal initiation.<sup>50</sup> Also, as noted above, a priest must be either a householder or the son of a householder anticipating marriage to be eligible to perform Rādhāramaṇa’s *sevā*.<sup>51</sup> These prerequisites parallel those for performing Vedic sacrifice, and thus they reflect the same cosmological axiom that social order extends from natural order.

The “analogue” dimension operative in the *bhakti* logos is one of continuous gradation. By nature it is defiant of exact measurement and hence resistant to judgment, even if norms are extensively articulated. This is the sphere of individual attitude, as well as of knowledge and skill in the execution of activities associated with *mūrti-sevā* and, more broadly, the *sādhana* of individual practitioners and priests. Ideally the temple priests from generation to generation embody the concentrated spirit of dedication and devotion exhibited by Rādhāramaṇa’s original worshipper. But whatever might constitute such devotional qualification must develop by a complex combination of cultural transfer (formal and non-formal modes of teaching and

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biological, since the latter determines prerequisites for Rādhāramaṇa priesthood. One might substitute “digital” with “objective” or “publicly recognisable” and “analogue” with “subjective” or “private.” But these latter terms could be misleading, since both “digital” and “analogue” modes will have both objective/public and subjective/private dimensions.

<sup>50</sup> Regarding issues of Caitanyaite *sampradāya* affiliation before Caitanya, Gupta (2002) has provided the best discussion I have seen. Concern over right spiritual lineage is, he notes, part of the larger Indian concern over parentage. Hence “embodiment,” in the sense of descent from particular parentage, has a spiritual dimension as well.

<sup>51</sup> One of the present-day Rādhāramaṇa Goswamis, breaking with tradition, gave up his family and accepted the *sannyāsa* order resulting, I am told, in his having to forfeit his right to perform Rādhāramaṇa’s *sevā*. A counter-example also exists: one Goswami who, presently in his 40’s, has no plans to marry, nor to accept the *sannyāsa* order, is allowed to worship Rādhāramaṇa (my thanks to Margaret Case for this latter example). Not obvious, but also to be kept in mind, is that *adhikāra* is specifically for the worship of Rādhāramaṇa. A Rādhāramaṇa Goswami would not likely be welcome to perform worship of some other Goswami temple image of Kṛṣṇa in Vrindavan or elsewhere, although they would be welcome to do so in temples of the greater Rādhāramaṇa community. Again (see previous fn.) there are exceptions. One senior Goswami and his sons are honoured in Kṛṣṇa temples in Jaipur, where they perform advisory roles. Cf. Fuller 1995 on Madurai Śaiva temple priests being allowed to worship only in that temple, despite textual claims to the contrary.

learning, through parents, relatives, and gurus), receptivity of individuals, and an unspecified set of imponderables in the lives of individuals.<sup>52</sup>

For the Rādhāramaṇa community, continuity, or the temporal dimension of liturgical order on a large scale, depends on positive accomplishment in both dimensions, although the “digital” dimension is arguably decisive for the maintenance of the community as it conceives itself. Clearly this dimension emphasizes, in the Rādhāramaṇa context, a high degree of insularity which, nevertheless, has proven effective in institutional preservation. In the next two chapters we will consider how a shift in emphasis to the “analogue” dimension is articulated in a Caitanyaite missionary context. For now, we can keep this distinction in mind while considering daily worship as a locus of institutional routine, devotional practice, and the *bhakti* logos in the Rādhāramaṇa temple.

I will conclude this section with another excerpt from the *Pragaṭotsav* cycle (#VIII) that expresses an open and participatory spirit in serving the Rādhāramaṇa image. The passage celebrates cooperative devotional community reminiscent of the BhP descriptions of communal atmosphere among the Vraja residents absorbed in service to Kṛṣṇa. According to the BhP, Kṛṣṇa in Vrindavan lived among cowherds, not brahmins; he was intimately attended by both men and women, cowherd boys and—most especially—young cowherd girls, not only by ritually purified males. The song below both recalls that atmosphere and, I would suggest, mildly questions the institutional structuring that supports the ongoing worship of Rādhāramaṇa while simultaneously affirming that structure. Paradoxically, it was from within the structured temple institution so different from this idyllic model that such a song was produced and in which the song is joyfully sung.

Someone [koī] holds an umbrella, someone a banana leaf, someone else flicks the camar.

Someone takes a peacock feather fan, someone a blue lotus, someone else rang [sic] the bell.

Someone, bringing a fan, makes them [Rādhā & Kṛṣṇa] comfortable, someone shows them a mirror.

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<sup>52</sup> The “imponderables” might include, for example, the presence or absence of what Neville calls the “boundary-crossing” phase of an individual’s life (1996: 161-171). Regarding the functions of the guru in Caitanyaite traditions, see Broo’s textual/ethnographic study (2003a), based largely on interviews with contemporary gurus, including some within the Rādhāramaṇa community.

.....  
Someone presses out the juice, someone applies unguents to their bodies;  
Someone bathes them in water which someone else takes away, someone brings the ingredients of pañcamṛt.  
Someone brings many herbs, someone the great herbs; little by little, love is increased [til-til neha baḍāi]. (Shapiro 1997: 37)  
.....

The final phrase of this last verse (“little by little, love is increased”) provides a motif for the second part of this chapter, wherein I will sketch some details of Rādhāramaṇa’s daily and annual worship cycles. *Bhakti* as practice (“little by little”) aims to deepen *bhakti* as attitude of love; and regulated *arcanam*, so the Caitanyaite theologians insisted, is an integral component of the practice for fostering pure *bhakti*, as a frame is integral to the picture (of Kṛṣṇa *lilā*) it surrounds. A picture frame both isolates and defines the artwork it frames apart from surroundings, and simultaneously it relates the painting with those surroundings. Similarly *vaidhī-bhakti* and its mode of practice, *arcanam*, serve both an isolating and an integrative function such that the *bhakti* logos is brought into clear relief, but also extends and incorporates it with the world of mundane existence. Put another way, as a “theology of embodiment,” *bhakti* is based on the premise that “engagement (or participation) in God should inform all of one’s activities in worldly life” (Prentiss 1999: 6). The practices of image worship are practices of embodiment, both acknowledging the shortcomings of embodiment and celebrating the sensory functions with reference to the object of worship as the perfect embodiment of sentience. Yet they are also practices aimed at transcending temporal embodiment, to gain full and uninterrupted participation in Kṛṣṇa *lilā*. As such they involve not only the senses, but also the disciplined imagination, a thinking and functioning more or less *as if* one is already situated in the transcendent realm.

Recalling our short look at Kṛṣṇa’s instructions to Uddhava on worshipping images in the previous chapter (in BhP 11.27), we encountered a rather generic step-by-step procedure for daily performance of *arcanam* for a divinity embodied in or identified with one or another material substance. Now, looking at a specific temple and the procedures prescribed for that temple image’s worship, we can gain a clearer picture of how the grammar and poetics of image worship together constitute the *bhakti* logos *in situ*.

## II.2 THE IDEAL AND PRACTICE OF WORSHIP (SEVĀ)

### II.2.1. Daily Service and the Double Life of Rādhāramaṇa

Worship in Rādhāramaṇa temple is a perpetual daily affair, involving several prescribed events throughout the day. Although occasional worship of a temporary image is a standard method of worship (also mentioned in BhP 11.27.13, 47), it is by no means the only one.<sup>53</sup> As in other Kṛṣṇa temples of Vraja, the sense of the deity's presence demands that he be constantly attended in what is conceived as his daily divine routine.<sup>54</sup>

Shrivatsa Goswami explains the logic of daily service in terms of *bhakti*:

The Sanskrit word for devotion is *bhakti*, which comes from the root *bhaj*, meaning service. Service of the beloved couple determines the ritual schedule in the temples of Vrindaban. The priests, assuming the role and feelings of the gopis, serve Radha and Krishna from the time they wake up until the time they retire. The root *bhaj* also means 'to divide', and this service to Krishna and Radha in the temple is divided into different periods of the day, following the pattern of Radha and Krishna's pastimes (Shrivatsa Goswami 2001: 105).

The pattern referred to here, inspired initially by the descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's Vraja *līlā* in the BhP, is one that has received textual expression in increasing elaboration since Rūpa's sixteenth-century eleven-verse *Aṣṭa-kaliya-līlā-smaraṇa-maṅgala-stotram* ("Auspicious Eulogy of Remembering the Pastimes in the Eightfold [daily] Time-frame"). Such exploration of the divine couple's exploits (especially Kṛṣṇadāsa's *Govinda-līlāmṛtam*), functioning as guidebooks for practitioners of *rāgānuga-sādhana*, constitute an important facet of BhP elaboration, or "new developments" in Kṛṣṇa *līlā* (Keisler).<sup>55</sup> Singling out the BhP's "focal point" of Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, the Rāsa Dance, these later accounts of daily divine routine portray each phase of the day as an episode in the meeting and parting romance of the divine couple.

In effect, the two protagonists are conceived as leading double lives, with everyone in the know about their secret lives except their "elders," Nanda, Yaśodā, and

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<sup>53</sup> Elgood, 27, over-generalises when she writes, "For the Hindu the image is an instrument of purpose, significant only in its role as a vessel fit to contain the deity with little consideration as to its intrinsic value. Images are discarded once they have served their spiritual purpose . . ."

<sup>54</sup> See Case (2000: 82-96) for an overview of the daily worship of Rādhāramaṇa. Here I will concentrate on only a few features of this routine.

<sup>55</sup> See Haberman (1988: 124-37) for an overview of *aṣṭa-kaliya-līlā-smaraṇa* practice and texts.

so on. The temple routine in some ways represents the outward life of Kṛṣṇa—his “public side” (administered largely, but not entirely, within the constraints of *vidhi*) whereas his “private life” remains invisible to all but the most adept devotees (who may reveal it to others by their words, songs, or actions).<sup>56</sup>

Although temple routine may be associated with outward form, and although the meditative practices of *rāgānuga-sādhana* are considered mainly the precinct of ascetic *bhaktas* minimally engaged in image worship (Toomey 1990: 170), Vraja temple priests such as those of Rādhāramaṇa see themselves as facilitating the divine couple’s intimate pastimes, the subject of such meditation. For them as for Vraja residents in general, even as temple images, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are factually engaged in their pastimes, whether or not one is able to perceive these events (Haberman 1994: 73). One aspires to cultivate this awareness from the very first service of waking the divine couple in the early morning. Even the rule that the Rādhāramaṇa priest must clap his hands to warn of his approach before entering the inner sanctum to awaken the divine couple should remind him of *līlā*:

The main reason for clapping the hands three times is that once, in the inner sanctum (*nikuñja mandira*), Rādhikā (Rādhā) spent the entire night in a (lover’s) huff (*mān avasthā*), and the *sakhīs* had become fatigued from trying to pacify her. Kṛṣṇa also failed to melt her heart. Just at that moment the priest opened the door (to the inner sanctum, without first knocking), and seeing this divine vision, fainted; in this condition he entered the *nikuñja-līlā* (the most intimate pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa) (GauraKṛṣṇa Gosvāmī 153).

In other words, one is to infer, as the unnamed, over-hasty priest stumbled in on the intimate *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, he died on the spot. As much as this occurrence tells of Rādhāramaṇa’s extraordinary grace toward that particular priest, it also tells other priests to keep to the rules and respect the boundaries of ritual propriety. For the priests of Rādhāramaṇa, the proper worship of the *ṭhākura* (divine image) is crucial to become eligible for direct *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa; although there is a playful spirit about the worship of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja—he being a playful Lord—temple service is not to be taken lightly.

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<sup>56</sup> See Haberman (1988: 35-36) on Rūpa’s conception of dramatic *rasa* theory in contrast to that of Abhinavagupta (10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>). The former emphasizes active participation in “the one Real Drama” (Kṛṣṇa-*līlā*) as “the very doorway into Ultimate Reality,” in contrast to the latter, for whom the drama is a “recognized fiction” that only points to Ultimate Reality. The sense of “double life” portrayed in Kṛṣṇa-*līlā* is, I suggest, facilitated by the *arcanam* mode of worship in the temple, with all its constraints of *vidhi* observance serving as a foil for the unseen *līlā*. It is thus a simultaneous distinction *from* the invisible “Real Drama” and a direct participation in it.

Indeed, the idiom of royal (hence respectful and properly performed) service is never far from sight in the daily cycle, counterbalancing the romantic idiom. How these two themes intermix is especially observable in the evening performance of formal honours, the daily *sandhyā āratī* ceremony, followed by the singing of the *sandhyā āratī* song.<sup>57</sup> Here we also encounter the theme of decoration and display which holds these two idioms and celebrates the fulfillment of patient devotional practice, namely to see and thus commune with the Lord, following the ways of the exemplary devotee Gopāla Bhaṭṭa.

Refrain: *Victory, victory to Rādhāramaṇa-lāl, the very life of Gopālabhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.*

*A peacock feather, crown, yellow dress, and shining vaijayantī-māla (garland) on his chest—a shining vaijayantī-māla on his chest, victory to Rādhāramaṇa-lāl . . .*

*Aligator-ornaments in his ears, tilaka shining on his forehead—beautiful shining tilaka on his forehead—victory to Rādhāramaṇa-lāl .*

*A curly lock of hair falling to the side, his eyes looking askance—bewildering the beautiful girls of Braj—victory to Rādhāramaṇa-lāl . . .*

*His waist bells and footbells ringing, his flute full of the nectar of his lips—the ringing flute full of the nectar of his lips—victory to Rādhāramaṇa-lāl . . .*

*He moves like a swan in the alleyways of Vrindavan—beautiful movement like a swan—victory to Rādhāramaṇa-lāl . . .*

*Gopālabhaṭṭa is following Rādhāramaṇa, each full of prema for the other—I give myself completely for that nectar of prema—victory to Rādhāramaṇa-lāl . . .*

*Śrī Gopīnātha beholds this picture of the Lord who protects his devotees—beautiful protector of his servants—victory to Rādhāramaṇa-lāl .*

*O beloved Śrī Rādhāramaṇa, the relisher of the nectar of Śrī Vṛndāvana—O Hari! Hari! Relisher of the nectar of Śrī Vṛndāvana—victory to Rādhāramaṇa-lāl . . .*

*Śrī Caitanya, Jīva, Rūpa, and Sanātana are a garland of the nectar of prema (on Rādhāramaṇa's chest)—Hari! Hari! Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, the servant of Sanātana (in the nectar of prema—victory to Rādhāramaṇa-lāl . . .*

<sup>57</sup> Authorship of this song is attributed to Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's disciple Gopīnātha. Its structure is typical of such *āratī* songs. Cf. a famous Gaṇapati-*āratī*, translated by Buehnemann: 70.

*Āratī* (or *ārati* or *ārātrika*) is a short ceremony of offering various items to the image by waving them in circles (or in the pattern of the syllable *om* as it would be written in Devanāgarī script) while standing and ringing a bell. The main items offered are a lamp (burning camphor or cotton wicks soaked in clarified butter or oil) and a conch shell filled with water. In most temples this ceremony will occur five to eight times in the course of the day, after food has been offered. It is a public event, whereby viewers will either observe silently while offering prayers, or they will sing songs considered appropriate for the particular deity, time of day, and possibly also season.

Carrying the dust of their feet on his head, Śrī Gopīnātha, O Lord, becomes pleased—Hari! Hari! Those dear to Śrī Rādhāramaṇa become pleased. (Gaurakṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, *Vaṁśa-vṛkṣa* insert)

This song is sung *a capella* by temple community members and visitors while facing Rādhāramaṇa with folded hands, expressing deference and submission.<sup>58</sup> The refrain, and the end of each verse, include the exclamation “*jāya*”—“victory,” expressing the appropriate accolade offered to royalty by its subjects. Sung in Vrajabhāṣā, the Vrindavan vernacular dialect, it affirms the common citizen’s ability to view and approach his or her king; but it is also the language of the Vraja poets celebrating Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s *mādhurya-līlā*.

We need not linger on this hymn, except to note the assemblage of images that articulate what is seen or supposed to be seen. As a celebration of *darśanam*, the concentrated viewing of a divinity (and being seen by that divinity), the first five verses (after the refrain) include description of Rādhāramaṇa’s features, highlighting details of his dress and ornamentation. Attention descends (roughly) from head to feet (in contrast to Kāpila’s meditation on Viṣṇu in the BhP), assembling for listeners the imagery of attractive and charming power culminating in Rādhāramaṇa’s own power of seeing, which bewilders (*mohī*) the local lasses. The remaining five verses celebrate the feelings of love experienced by Rādhāramaṇa’s principal exemplary worshippers; remember the most prominent community founders (who, collectively, comprise a “garland of the nectar of *prema*” [on the Lord’s chest]); and place all within Vrindavan, the nectar of which Rādhāramaṇa is the chief connoisseur. The final (signature) verse celebrates *sparsanam* (blessings by touch): by taking the humble position signalled by placing the founding *bhaktas*’ foot-dust on one’s head (following the hymn’s author’s example), one can hope to experience the contentment (*karata ni-hāla*) found among Rādhāramaṇa’s intimate associates.

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<sup>58</sup> I have seen only men, not women, singing this song. Usually about six to ten men, regular visitors and one or two Goswamis, stand slightly toward the back of the temple courtyard facing the *thākura* as they sing these verses with full-throated enthusiasm while other visitors either continue to remain viewing Rādhāramaṇa or begin to disperse. “Folded hands,” the standard Indian *mudrā* of showing respect, is with palms together, fingers pointing upward. The singers typically alternate this gesture with flinging their arms upward, especially underlining the word “*jaya*.” The singing begins immediately after the short (ca. seven minutes) *āratī*, during which all guests are expected to stand (a sign near the entrance in Hindi warns that to not stand during *āratī* is an *aparādha*—an offense) while the temple bell and gongs are rung.

Each of the five *āratis* and eight periods of *darśanam* throughout the ritual day is an opportunity for temple visitors to meet their Lord and celebrate the experience of meeting and welcoming after a period of absence and “separation” (*viraha*). But the cycle never stops. Not long after one *darśanam*, the curtain will again close in preparation for yet another of Rādhāramaṇa’s services conducted by his priests—either bathing, dressing, eating, or resting—as prescribed in the temple manual *Nitya-sevā-mañjarī*. Actions follow relatively invariant prescription (catering to divine “bodily needs” as well as royal protocol), all understood to facilitate the divine amatory adventures occurring unseen by ordinary eyes.

What eyes and other senses perceive is, beside the natural world, the realm of art and artifice. In Rādhāramaṇa temple worship, ritual prescription is the background for devotional arts—culinary, decorative, and performative—that are meant both to entertain Rādhāramaṇa and to facilitate participation by community members and pilgrims. As creative expression affirming, sustaining, and renewing the *bhakti* logos, these arts facilitate synaesthetic experience, drawing devotees and their object of devotion together by combining several types of sense activity.<sup>59</sup> Let us now consider food as a vehicle of *bhakti* and *bhakti* art form in its two phases of ritual circulation, first as *bhoga* offering to Rādhāramaṇa, then as *prasāda* offering of Rādhāramaṇa’s “remnants” to the devotees.

### II.2.2. Rādhāramaṇa Enjoys His Lunch

I will begin with an excerpt from the Rādhāramaṇa daily worship instruction manual, *Nitya-sevā-mañjarī*, an unpublished, handwritten Vrajabhāṣā text from the hand of the nineteenth-century Rādhāramaṇa priest, Guṇamañjarīdās Gosvāmī. This text is followed today by the temple priests.<sup>60</sup> That text covers the entire day’s ser-

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<sup>59</sup> For a useful discussion on synaesthesia in a Vaiṣṇava devotional context, see Sanford (2000) on how devotional poetry in the Vallabha Vaiṣṇava tradition (with close kinship to the Caitanya tradition) aims to bring about synaesthesia in the hearer (especially, how hearing brings about “seeing”). After surveying others’ views on the meaning of synaesthesia (Allen Entwistle: a “multi-media event” bringing about sensory confusion; Lawrence Sullivan: a “unity of the senses” (57-58), Sanford concludes that “[s]ynaesthesia is a type of the larger category of metaphor, defined as ‘understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another’ ”

<sup>60</sup> At least, so I am told. As most of the procedures take place behind closed curtains where only temple priests are allowed, an outside observer will not be able to see the variations in practices, either between the text and a given priest, nor among various priests. I went through the text with one of the present Goswamis, who noted minor differences, which I note here in the footnotes. I did notice at one time a priest consulting something written (as

vices, from waking Śrījī (Rādhāramaṇa) well before dawn to locking the temple at night (having first made sure no cats remain inside). Let us go through the details for offering Śrījī his lunch, viewing it as a set of prescribed “felicity conditions” prerequisite for the procedure’s efficacy, satisfying Rādhāramaṇa.

When the *rāja-bhoga* [noontime food offering] is prepared, bring Śrījī (Rādhāramaṇa) into the *bhoga-mandira*.<sup>61</sup> First remove the staff (*lakuṭ*) and flute, as well as the chin ornament (*cibuk*) and nose ornament (*vesar*). Also remove the necklace (*hār*), ankle ornaments, wrist ornaments, and foot ornaments.<sup>62</sup> From Śrī Priyā-jī (Rādhā) remove the heavy necklace.

Set up three spouted pots with Yamunā water, along with a flat plate (*taṣṭā*), a small pot (*lotā*), and a receptacle of water for sipping (*ācamana*). In a small plate (*thālī*) place *tulasī* leaves as well as a cloth for cleaning the mouth (*mukha-mārjana*), a toothpick (*khirkā*), and the cup with sandalwood paste (*candana*).<sup>63</sup> In the middle [of the area before Rādhāramaṇa] place the rice vessel. On top of the rice place a cup with liquid ghee. In front of that place the sweet rice (*mīṭau bhāt*),<sup>64</sup> sweet biscuits (*miśrī ke phulkā*), and fried pulse cakes (*rasvarā*). In the summer season place thin sweet yogurt (*śikhiran*) near the other items. In front of Śrī Priyā-jī place a spoon with the vessel of condensed milk (*khīr*). Thinking that Śrī Priyā-jī is serving [the Lord], in front and behind place white-flour biscuits (*maidā ke phulkā*). To the right of the rice plate [as seen when facing the Lord, place] the *mung dāl*. Behind the pot of boiled rice, on the east side, place the vessel of curry (*kaḍī*). Behind the white-flour biscuits place the spinach vessel. Near the brown-flour biscuits (*cūna ke phulkā*) place the *urad dāl*. Place *cūrmā*,<sup>65</sup> *sadhāna*,<sup>66</sup> buttermilk (*maṭā*) in which either *barī* or *pakaurī* is placed. Mung *pāpar* and sesame seeds (*tilvarī*) are also placed there. *Tulasī* leaves should be dropped onto each preparation.

[After the offering is set up] the Lord’s right hand is cleansed with sandalwood paste.<sup>67</sup> The Lord’s mouth is cleansed (*mukha-marjana*) with a cloth. Water is sprinkled from the conch on all sides. Show the cow-sign (*dhenu-mudrā*), and with the fish-sign (*matsya-mudrā*) one chants one’s mantra<sup>68</sup> ten times and offers prayer (*prarthana*). Then, coming outside [the *bhoga-mandira*], fan [the Lord], or else another can do the fanning.<sup>69</sup>

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if reminding himself of the right sequence of procedures) while concluding noontime services. Presumably he was consulting this text.

<sup>61</sup> This is a separate dining room. Rādhāramaṇa’s small size allows him to be easily lifted and moved, though it is unusual to do so with a stone image.

<sup>62</sup> The idea is to make the Lord more comfortable for enjoying his meal; yet (!) his crown remains in place (Interview with Padmanabh Gosvāmī, November 2001)

<sup>63</sup> The leaves of the *tulasī* plant (holy basil) are considered essential in the worship of Rādhāramaṇa, as in all Kṛṣṇa temples, and are offered profusely in Vrindavan’s temples.

<sup>64</sup> This is saffron rice, a dry sweet yellow rice preparation.

<sup>65</sup> *Cūrmā*: a sweet made of fried powdered grain, sugar and ghee; not presently offered (Padmanabh Gos.)

<sup>66</sup> Not presently offered (Padmanabh. Gos.)

<sup>67</sup> The Lord will use his right hand to eat; smearing one’s hands with sandalwood paste is a way of purifying them.

<sup>68</sup> The eighteen-syllable *gopāla-mantra*, received at the time of initiation.

<sup>69</sup> Now there is an electric fan! (Padmanabh Gos.)

Read out the [Viṣṇu- or Gopāla-] *sahasra-nāma*.<sup>70</sup> The *prārthanā* to be recited consists of three verses from *Padyāvalī*, revealed by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī-jī. Of these three, the first two express all the *bhāva-s* [devotional attitudes]. The last verse is in *śṛṅgāra* [(conjugal-) *rasa*].

[Then follows the three verses: *Padyāvalī* 116-118<sup>71</sup>]:

O Enemy of Mura! That love which is invested in the food offered by Vidura to you, in the things offered by Kuntī; which is contained in the food offered by the residents of Vraja on top of Govardhana; which is in the flat-rice offered by Sudāma, which is in the breast milk of Yaśodā; which is in the chappan-bhoga offering of Bhāradvaja Muni; which is in the offering of berries by the tribal woman; which is in the nectar of the Vraja milkmaids' lips; which is in the food offered by the wives of the yajñic brahmins—kindly imbue my offering to you with such love.

O Enemy of Mura! As you found pleasure in the devotion of the brahmins' wives, in the delicacies offered by Vidura; in the milk of Vraja's cows, in the offering found in the open fist of your friend Sudāma; in the breast of Yaśodā, in the nectar offered by the girls of Vraja—so may you be pleased with this gift.

May the pleasure you find in the milk offered by Śyamalā, the sweets offered by Kamalā, the *laddu* offered by Bhadrā, and the nectar offered by Somābhā (Candrāvalī) be had by you a hundred-fold in my offering placed before you, prepared under the order of Rādhā.

Also sing songs in Vrajabhāsā. The songbook is separate.<sup>72</sup>

Then [to conclude the meal] clap the hands and ring the bell. Offer water [for drinking] with the spouted vessel. Show the *candana* vessel, thinking the ghee is thus being removed from the Lord's hands. Wash the Lord's hands, then show the toothpick. Pour *ācamana* water into a flat vessel (*taṣṭā*).

Bring Śrī-jī back to the *simhāsana* and offer him betel (*vīri-bhoga*) with *tulasī*. After some minutes (one *ghaḍī*: 24 minutes) remove the *bhoga* from the presence of Śrī Priyā-jī. Offering her the remnants of Śrī Lāl-jī's [Rādhāramaṇa's] *vīri-bhoga*, remove the *bhoga* from the presence of Śrī [Gopāla Bhaṭṭa] Gosvāmī-jī. Offer [him] the betel remnants from the divine couple (*śrī-yugala prasādi vīri bhoga*). Offer flower garlands and perfumed oil to the divine couple (*śrī-yugala-svarūpan*). Place the Lord's staff and flute. Purify the place [of the *bhoga* offering].

Offer *rāja-bhoga āratī*, following the same method as *śṛṅgāra-āratī*. [After *āratī*], clean the area where the offered items were placed.

<sup>70</sup> Either of the two thousand-name verses are used, according to preference of the *pūjārī* (Padmanabh Gos.)

<sup>71</sup> The first two of these three verses appear in reverse order in *Nitya-sevā-mañjarī* from the order given in *Padyāvalī*. Here we are keeping the order found in *Nitya-sevā-mañjarī*. The second (first) verse, beginning *dvija-strīnām* is attributed to Rāmānuja, although it is not to be found in his known works (conversation with M. Narasimhachary, 2002). The verse beginning *yā prītir vidurārpite* is from an unidentified source, and the third is “*samāhartum*” (invoked by the author, Rūpa Gosvāmī).

<sup>72</sup> The songbook referred to must be Guṇamañjaridās Gosvāmī's *Rādhāramaṇa-pada-mañjarī*.

American readers of this text are likely to associate it with the *Amy Vanderbilt Complete Book of Etiquette*, a guide for the perplexed domestic hostess, viewing it as an Indian version of a handbook on how to set table for and serve an important guest. Indeed, hospitality is an overarching idiom in image worship ritual, especially as an important duty of householders. And for the Rādhāramaṇa goswamis, who pride themselves on their culinary hospitality to temple visitors, the idiom extends in both the divine and human direction.<sup>73</sup> But let us also consider the more vital level of food in this ritual, as clearly this is a basic vehicle for relating with the divinity as well as with the world. As David Smith notes (1993: 159), “The notion of consumption is crucially important For Hinduism, eating is the basis of life, and a root metaphor for religion and politics.”<sup>74</sup> As it is the time of day when human beings are likely to eat a meal, so it is time for Rādhāramaṇa’s lunch. The primary explicit “objective” of the rite is to satisfy Rādhāramaṇa and his associates with a fresh, tasty, and nourishing meal.

Rādhāramaṇa maintains a strict brahmanical diet: He is quite particular about what he eats (listed in the text above); what he does not eat (things never offered, aside from any non-vegetarian items, include onions, garlic, potatoes and tomatoes—the latter two being non-indigenous vegetables); who does the cooking (only male Rādhāramaṇa goswamis, at least for *kaccā*<sup>75</sup> food); and, as we have discussed above, who serves him the food.

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<sup>73</sup> The various goswami families may take the opportunity of their own period of Rādhāramaṇa worship to show their largesse, as for example one day in October 2001 when priests of the worshipping family invited two hundred Vrindavan widows to receive a lunch feast. At other times they may invite visiting families of their disciples, or other groups of pilgrims.

<sup>74</sup> See also Witzel (509): “The mesocosmic function of ritual [in Hindu religion] is, first and most importantly, a cosmic exchange of food: humans offer food substances (nowadays also fruits and flowers) to the gods, these partake of it and then give the remnants (*ucchiṣṭa*) back to the humans in the form of food leftovers. This is now called *prasāda*, ‘grace.’”

<sup>75</sup> “Raw” food—including what is boiled or otherwise prepared without deep-frying. The Rādhāramaṇa Goswamis note with pride that cooking and offering standards in this temple are higher than in the neighboring temples of Vrindavan. For example, no preparations from outside the community are ever offered; water for cooking is always collected directly from the sacred Yamunā river (upstream from Vrindavan, then carefully filtered: ritual purity competes with material pollution; water is never from a tube well); the fire used in cooking (as well as for lighting the lamps used before Rādhāramaṇa) is considered to be the same established at the time of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa; and the entire amount cooked (even when for a large feast) is physically brought before the *ṭhākura* rather than mere samplings of each preparation.

Assuming all the prerequisites are met, one can still not be sure the Lord is pleased; hence included in the procedure are the three Sanskrit petitionary prayers excerpted from Rūpa's *Padyāvalī*. The first of these is intriguing, in that the Lord himself is requested to compensate for a possible lack of the most important "ingredient," *bhakti*, in the offering, while the second and third prayers are straightforward appeals that Rādhāramaṇa be pleased by the offering. In all three prayers several exemplary *bhaktas* are remembered for their unequivocal success in the offering of their respective delicacies. Moreover, there is allusion to the range of *rasas*—loving relationships—culminating in *śṛṅgāra-rāsa* (*mādhurya-rasa*) as the particular modes of exchange within which food is offered and thus love is communicated. The salient message of these prayers is one of hope. In effect they say, "Let what has been successfully accomplished previously on several occasions by others be similarly successfully accomplished by me now, namely to affect a devotional exchange pleasing to the Lord, despite any shortcomings on my part."

From one perspective this procedure is certainly formulaic, loosely following procedures enjoined in the HBV (8.96-113) and emphasizing invariance.<sup>76</sup> The food preparations to be offered are all specified, as is their proper positioning; the sequence of procedures is prescribed, with an emphasis on purity; there is little or no apparent scope for variation or creativity. On this level, if accomplished as prescribed, the "ritual's occurrence" (Rappaport: 89) is sufficient to determine that the food has been accepted by Rādhāramaṇa (in a "digital" sense) and hence can be distributed as *prasāda*. Yet incorporated within the procedure is an appeal for the end result to go beyond quotidian formula to transcendent feeling. That feeling is invoked in the Sanskrit prayers (not found in the HBV) through a web of associations linked largely to the BhP, but also to other texts, and other styles of recitation through which the world of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* in Vrindavan is recollected. As Rādhāramaṇa eats (only with his divine associates, not with the *pūjārī* present) he is likely to be entertained by such recitation or musical strains.

Another aspect of this procedure, implied by the three Sanskrit verses, is the association of food in general with *bhakti* and the *circular* (rather than sequential)

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<sup>76</sup> The HBV prescription for *bhoga* offering does not specify such things as placement of different dishes in relation to each other. It does give a list of forbidden and acceptable foods (followed carefully in Rādhāramaṇa temple, to my knowledge) and emphasizes functions meant for purification of the food. It provides other regulative minutiae, such as the best size and type of plate on which food should be offered.

movement of devotional feeling through the offering of food to the *mūrti* and receiving of “remnants” as *prasāda*, the Lord’s grace. The anthropologist Paul Toomey highlights this dynamic, elaborating on the metaphoric and metonymic associations of food with *preman* in Vaiṣṇava practices of the Govardhana area in Vraja (Toomey 1990: 164):

The gift of food-love moves in a circle, from the cowherds to the hill Krishna-Govardhan, and back to Krishna and the cowherds once more. Thus, the food-love metonymy substantiates the circular process underlying devotional experience: Krishna, it is believed, creates devotees through his grace, in order that he might reflexively experience through their loving feelings his own blissful and loving nature (*ānanda*).

The idea of the “gift of food-love” applies in the Rādhāramaṇa context as well, explaining the logic of the first of the three verses quoted above, with its request that Kṛṣṇa be the one who makes up for deficient *bhakti* in the cook or *pūjārī* (the priest who performs *pūjā*, or *sevā* to the deity). Also the symbolic quality of food in relation to *rasa* as feeling is compelling: The varied tastes of various food preparations are analogous to the “tastes” evoked in relation to Kṛṣṇa through appropriate exchanges (Toomey 1990: 162), culminating in *mādhurya-rasa*, conjugal mood or, literally, the “sweet taste.”

Yet food’s physicality and transience, and its association with bodily sustenance, make it a strange symbol for transcendence. An offering of *rāja-bhoga* (or any of the five regular food offerings in the course of each day in Rādhāramaṇa temple) is a presentation of real food, prepared in such a way that it is physically edible, nourishing, and satisfying. Indeed, the BhP uses these tangible effects of eating *analogously* to illustrate the equally tangible, if less physical, transformational effects of the practice of *bhakti*:

Devotion, direct experience of the Supreme Lord, and detachment from other things—these three occur simultaneously for one who has taken shelter (of the Lord), in the same way as pleasure, nourishment and relief from hunger come simultaneously and increasingly, with each bite, for a person engaged in eating. (BhP 11.2.42, translation, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust edition)

The threefold effects of eating are like threefold effects of *bhakti*. This bio-social analogy between routines of preparing and eating food and the experience of approaching transcendence helps explain how *bhakti* as a participatory modality of be-

ing and acting links the “normal, daily life” with the “transcendental life encoded in esoteric knowledge” (Case 2000: 152). Also, the formal element of ritual represented by our sample from the *Nitya-sevā-mañjarī* shows that ritual routine upholds a creative tension in the mundane/transcendent polarity. Bodily ritual is a means to mitigate this opposition, but ritual efficacy is not automatic: Prayers seeking compensation for shortcomings, though embedded in the ritual, serve to remind the priest that (“analogue”) efforts to reach transcendence are ever dependent on the Lord’s grace, however “correctly” the food is prepared and the rituals performed.

Decisive is that a transformation is to be affected: *bhoga*—the food offered to the deity for his pleasure—is to become *prasāda*—the food “remnants” from the Lord’s meal sanctified by his having tasted it. Only then can the sanctified food be partaken of—first by the priest(s) whose period of *sevā* is current (along with his or their family members and temple functionaries);<sup>77</sup> then by others to whom the priests distribute it. Only as *prasāda* can the food have the transformative effect that goes beyond mundane considerations of purity, nourishment, and ordinary taste.

### II.2.3. Gastro-intertextuality: The *Kulhiyā* Offering

*Prasāda* is to be eaten with respect and reverence, as befits sanctified food and as befits what is considered infused with transformative power. The desired effect is, of course, that one becomes infused with intensified devotional feeling toward Kṛṣṇa, disengaging one from the inebriating conditions of embodied life. In Rādhāramaṇa temple, this understanding of *prasāda*’s potency is epitomised in the daily offering of a particular sweet cooked milk preparation, *khoa* or *kulhiyā*,<sup>78</sup> a “specialty of the house” commemorative of a celebrated *līlā* of another Kṛṣṇa image (in the village of Remunā, near Jagannātha Purī) and his ascetic devotee Mādhavendra Purī, said to have occurred long before the appearance of Rādhāramaṇa.<sup>79</sup> That story, narrated in

<sup>77</sup> In the Rādhāramaṇa temple, *prasāda* goes to those who are “eligible recipients” (*prasādi adhikārin*). Typically the priest in charge and his family will, in the course of their period of *sevā*, hold several feasts for selected groups—extended family, disciples and their families, Vrindavan widows, or a group of sadhus.

<sup>78</sup> *Khoa* is boiled-down milk thickened with sugar. In Rādhāramaṇa temple it is offered (during *sandhyā-bhoga*) and then distributed (usually for a donation of 10 rupees each) in golf-ball sized clay cups. Gaurakṛṣṇa G. notes that it was originally called *amṛta-keli*, as the story below indicates.

<sup>79</sup> See Vaudeville (1999: 134-39) for a discussion on conflicting sectarian versions of Mādhavendra’s history.

CC, illustrates the complementary blend of *vidhi* and *rāga* which characterises Rādhāramaṇa temple worship. It also shows how a ritual action can participate in “inter-rituality” as much as intertextuality to elaborate devotional signification, extending the “horizontal” dimension of the liturgical order.<sup>80</sup> According to Gaurakṛṣṇa Gosvāmī (168-69), this practice of *kulhiyā* offering to Rādhāramaṇa was instituted by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa himself, inspired by the Remunā story. I will now make an excursus into this narrative, as it affords several insights into the ethos of worship operative in the Rādhāramaṇa temple, highlighting and linking together regard for devotional asceticism, priestly piety, and the ability of Kṛṣṇa, as an image, to act mischievously (and moderately supernaturally) for the sake of his devotee.

This story centers around Mādhavendra Purī (ca. 1420-1490), an ascetic highly revered by the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas as the guru of Caitanya’s guru. Having been ordered in a dream by his Kṛṣṇa image at Govardhana (Gopāla)<sup>81</sup> to obtain sandalwood in Jagannātha Purī, Mādhavendra set out alone to make the long journey.<sup>82</sup> On the way, near his destination, he stopped in Remuṇā where he visited the temple of Gopinātha (Kṛṣṇa). While there, it occurred to him that he could do some research on behalf of Gopāla:

Mādhavendra Purī thought, “I shall inquire from the priest what foods are offered to Gopinātha so that by making arrangements in our kitchen, we can offer similar foods to Śrī Gopāla.” When the brāhmaṇa priest was questioned about this matter, he explained in detail what kinds of food were offered to the Deity of Gopinātha. The brāhmaṇa priest said,

“In the evening the Deity is offered sweet rice in twelve earthen pots. Because the taste is as good as nectar [*amṛta*], it is named *amṛta-keli*. This sweet rice is celebrated throughout the world as *gopinātha-kṣīra*.<sup>83</sup> It is not offered anywhere else in the world.”

<sup>80</sup> Food’s use in society comes very close to possessing the characteristics of language. See Ramanujan (1992) on this topic in the South Asian context, and especially his discussion on “Figures of Food” (233-37). Rādhāramaṇa’s *kulhiyā* participates in inter-rituality, giving it extended “connotative” and “suggestive” qualities which act to enhance devotional sentiments.

<sup>81</sup> According to tradition this was the image Govardhananāthajī, worshipped today by the Vallabha sampradāya in Nāthadwara, Rajasthan. Kṛṣṇadāsa’s elaborating on this *mūrti* in connection to Mādhavendra indicates disputed proprietorship over the image between the Vallabha and Caitanya followers by the time he wrote (early 17<sup>th</sup> century).

<sup>82</sup> Sandalwood, ground to a paste, has a cooling effect when smeared on the body. It is one of the standard items offered to respected persons and images in India.

<sup>83</sup> See fn. 78 above. *Kṣīra* is milk or condensed milk. “Sweet rice” is a favorite sweet preparation consisting of rice cooked slowly in boiled down milk, with sugar. More precisely it would be called *kṣīraṇna* (milk and grain/rice), but it is commonly called simply *kṣīra*.

While Mādhavendra Purī was talking with the brāhmaṇa priest, the sweet rice was placed before the Deity as an offering. Hearing this, Mādhavendra Purī thought as follows.

“If, without my asking, a little sweet rice is given to me, I can then taste it and make a similar preparation to offer my Lord Gopāla.”

Mādhavendra Purī became greatly ashamed (*lajjā pāṣā*) when he desired to taste the sweet rice, and he immediately began to think of Lord Viṣṇu. While he was thus thinking of Lord Viṣṇu, the offering was completed, and the *ārati* ceremony began. After the *ārati* was finished, Mādhavendra Purī offered his obeisances to the deity and then left the temple. He did not say anything more to anyone.

Mādhavendra Purī avoided begging. He was completely unattached and indifferent to material things. If, without his begging, someone offered him some food, he would eat; otherwise he would fast. A *paramahansa*<sup>84</sup> like Mādhavendra Purī is always satisfied in the loving service of the Lord. Material hunger and thirst cannot impede his activities. When he desired to taste a little sweet rice offered to the Deity, he considered that he had committed an offense by desiring to eat what was being offered to the Deity. Mādhavendra Purī left the temple and sat down in the village marketplace, which was vacant. Sitting there, he began to chant. In the meantime, the temple priest laid the Deity down to rest.<sup>85</sup> Finishing his daily duties, the priest went to take rest. In a dream he saw the Gopīnātha deity come to talk to him, and he [the Lord] spoke as follows.

“O priest, please get up and open the door of the temple. I have kept one pot of sweet rice for the *sannyāsī* (Mādhavendra Purī). This pot of sweet rice is just behind my cloth curtain. You did not see it because of my tricks. A *sannyāsī* named Mādhavendra Purī is sitting in the vacant marketplace. Please take this pot of sweet rice from behind me and deliver it to him.”

Awaking from the dream, the priest immediately rose from bed and took a bath before entering the deity’s room. He then opened the temple door. According to the deity’s directions, the priest found the pot of sweet rice behind the cloth curtain. He removed the pot and mopped up the place where it had been kept. He then went out of the temple. Closing the door of the temple, he went to the village with the pot of sweet rice. He called out in every stall in search of Mādhavendra Purī. Holding the pot of sweet rice, the priest called,

“Will he whose name is Mādhavendra Purī please come and take this pot! Gopīnātha has stolen this pot of sweet rice for you! Please come and take this pot of sweet rice and enjoy the *prasāda* with great happiness! You are the most fortunate person within these three worlds!”<sup>86</sup>

Hearing this invitation, Mādhavendra Purī came out and identified himself. The priest then delivered the pot of sweet rice and offered his obeisances, falling flat before him. When the story about the pot of sweet rice was ex-

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<sup>84</sup> *Paramahansa* would nowadays be translated by practitioners as “great, swanlike person,” an appellation for spiritually advanced ascetics, even if, as Sanskritists insist, the *hansa* is a goose, not a swan.

<sup>85</sup> *Sāyana-sevā*, “resting service”: Images are placed in small beds in the evening, unless they are too large and heavy, in which case an *utsāva-mūrti*, a smaller, usually metal, version of the main image will be placed in a bed, representing the main image.

<sup>86</sup> “Three worlds” refers to a common Indic cosmogonic conception of earthly, celestial, and intermediary cosmic regions.

plained to him in detail, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī at once became absorbed in ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa.<sup>87</sup> Upon seeing the ecstatic loving symptoms manifest in Mādhavendra Purī, the priest was struck with wonder. He could understand why Kṛṣṇa had become so much obliged to him (Mādhavendra), and he saw that Kṛṣṇa's action was befitting. The priest offered obeisances to Mādhavendra Purī and returned to the temple. Then, in ecstasy, Mādhavendra Purī ate the sweet rice offered to him by Kṛṣṇa (CC 2.4.115-139. Bhaktivedānta Swami, trans.)

The narration concludes with the ascetic hastening on his journey to avoid attention from crowds of pious local citizens the next morning.

In this account, a temple priest, attentive to the regulative (*vaidhī-sādhana*) worship of the temple image, wins Kṛṣṇa's grace in the form of insight into the intimate dealings between the Lord and his spiritually advanced devotee. The ascetic Mādhavendra, with his elevated devotional sensibilities, feels shame for even thinking to taste a food-offering meant for the image while the Lord was receiving it, even though his thought was not really inappropriate (since his idea was to taste it *after* the completion of the offering, after it had been transformed into *prasāda*). Kṛṣṇa, usually a seemingly passive recipient of worship and offerings in his *arcā-mūrti*, on this occasion becomes an active agent "by a trick" (*māyayā*) to assure his devotee that his thought to taste the *prasāda* was devotionally appropriate, not offensive. The omniscient Gopīnātha (who subsequently becomes famous as "Kṣīra-cora-Gopīnātha," "the sweet-rice-thieving Lord of the *gopīs*"), recognising that Mādhavendra's desire to taste the offering was motivated exclusively by the desire to improve service to himself (Kṛṣṇa) in his form as Gopāla, seizes an opportunity to act as the servant of his devotee. He breaks the rules, so to speak, as a "thief" to prove that his devotee has not broken any rules but rather has affirmed the purpose of the rule (that one should not think of enjoying anything unless it has been first offered to the Lord for his pleasure). Simultaneously Kṛṣṇa acts as guru to his priest-servant by pointing out to him the elevated spiritual status of Mādhavendra.<sup>88</sup> Finally, the narrator has his readers/hearers understand that the priest is not unable to comprehend the import of what has transpired; rather, his faithful and humble attention to

<sup>87</sup> "Absorbed in ecstatic love," *prema-āvīṣṭa*: literally "saturated with love."

<sup>88</sup> The continuation of this particular narrative serves Kṛṣṇadāsa to contrast Mādhavendra's devotional behaviour as a "*paramahansa sannyāsī*" to stereotyped "*māyāvādī-sannyāsīs*." Whereas the former, despite (or because of) attainment of spiritual perfection, simply proceeds on his mission to obtain sandalwood for his deity Gopāla, the latter followers of the Advaita school of Vedānta are thought to renounce all pursuits in an effort to terminate karmic bondage.

his duties (including bathing before approaching the Lord, even in an extraordinary circumstance) qualifies him for such a blessing.<sup>89</sup>

Aside from showing how the “path of passion” (*rāga-mārga*) and the “path of rules” (*vidhi-mārga*) are complementary in the context of *arcanam*, this narrative is typical of many which serve to demonstrate to the devotees the active presence of the Lord in his *arcā-mūrti*. As in this account, in others the Lord sometimes “breaks the rules” of ordinary laws of nature, not so much to demonstrate his power, but rather the opposite—to demonstrate his accessibility and readiness to become servant to his servant (thereby breaking the “rule” that he is always the master).

So, as there are exemplary offerers of food to Kṛṣṇa we have in the example of Mādhavendra Purī an exemplary receiver of *prasāda*. For the worshippers of Rādhāramaṇa, the daily routine of offering and receiving *kulhiyā*, although rule-governed and predictable, still points to and potentially inspires transcendent feeling akin to that of the exemplar devotee in his reciprocation with Kṛṣṇa’s image. Once more, a routine ritual practice points back to a charismatic moment, such that by the synaesthetic combination of tasting and recalling a narrative the devotee participates in and sustains a network of devotional associations and meanings that affirm the *bhakti* logos.

While synaesthesia is operative in daily worship, it comes to full expression and elaboration more occasionally, either in celebrating a scheduled annual festival or as a special arrangement by a particular Goswami family when performing its scheduled periodic *sevā*.<sup>90</sup> Occasional worship expands possibilities otherwise constrained by exigencies of daily routine. Among multiple functions, it responds to seasonal changes (environmental conditions), commemorates events important to a community’s identity (such as the appearance day of Rādhāramaṇa), and reaffirms charismatic presence (the divine image as reciprocative with his devotees).<sup>91</sup> As in other

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<sup>89</sup> The priest’s humility is implied by his not showing any pride for having been the recipient of special attentions by the Lord in the form of a dream.

<sup>90</sup> These two functions often coincide: A Goswami family whose turn it is to perform *sevā* during a period within which a particular scheduled festival takes place is likely to make special effort to organise the event to be aesthetically (synaesthetically!) pleasing.

<sup>91</sup> On multiple purposes served in ritual, see Grimes (266). Naturally various socio-political purposes may also be served by ritual events, whether routine or special: Ritual sponsors and priestly families find opportunities to display wealth, influence, generosity, and religiosity, in narrower or wider communities. Rādhāramaṇa community dynamics are certainly no exception to these considerations. Still, it is my contention in this thesis that religious practices cannot be reduced to expression of such motivations alone. Put another way, the *bhakti* lo-

Kṛṣṇa temples in Vrindavan and wider Vraja (and as in worship communities throughout India and worldwide, for that matter), Rādhāramaṇa temple has a set annual routine of observances. The Vrajabhāṣā *Utsava-mañjarī* of Guṇamañjarīdās Gosvāmī serves as the temple manual stipulating particulars for these events more directly than the *Haribhaktivilāsa*.<sup>92</sup> Such occasional (*naimittika*) worship events provide special opportunities to make the ordinary (*laukika*) into the extraordinary (*alaukika*). Yet, as we shall see, they also can serve the function of making the extraordinary, or unfamiliar, into the familiar.

#### II.2.4. Liquid Renewal: Rādhāramaṇa’s Janmāṣṭamī Abhiṣeka

As one example of an important annual festival in the Rādhāramaṇa temple illustrating the themes just mentioned we shall next look at Rādhāramaṇa’s Kṛṣṇa-Janmāṣṭamī *abhiṣeka*, observed by this author in August 2001. As noted in chapter one, this festival is prescribed in the HBV, as well as in the *Utsava-mañjarī*; the precise procedure for the *abhiṣeka*, or ritual affusion, is (as also noted previously) provided by Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *Kṛṣṇajanmatithividhi*. These together, along with loud *kīrtana* conducted throughout the procedure (from the back of the temple courtyard) and the prayers or verses that might be recited by individuals during the event, provide the basics of meaning and scripting for the “ensemble of texts” (Bell 1998: 206, citing Clifford Geertz) that is the performance of the event.<sup>93</sup>

Unlike other temples in Vrindavan and elsewhere, where *abhiṣeka* is performed in the late evening, Rādhāramaṇa temple conducts this event beginning mid-morning.<sup>94</sup> Bate Krishna Goswami, one of the senior-most priests, sits to one side on

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gos acknowledges and accommodates worldly motives as a starting point from which purification of motive, by Kṛṣṇa’s grace, takes place.

<sup>92</sup> See Asimakrishna Dasa 1996 for a comparison of HBV festival injunctions and eighteenth-century festival practices in the Govindadeva temple, Jaipur, which are based on the Rādhāramaṇa annual festival calendar, the *Vratotsava-nirṇaya*. A comparison of HBV with festival practices in Rādhāramaṇa temple today has yet to be undertaken.

<sup>93</sup> “Performance theory” in the study of ritual has served, as Catherine Bell observes (Bell: 1998), to get away from commonly assumed dichotomies—text versus praxis and thought versus action. Suffice here to note simply that in the context of this present study, acknowledging the performative character of image worship need not obscure the high importance on texts placed by the practitioners themselves.

<sup>94</sup> “It has always been that way,” comments one Rādhāramaṇa priest. In any case, no one complains of scriptural deviation (it is prescribed for late night to commemorate Kṛṣṇa’s appearance at midnight), and it serves to allow temple-goers to view the ceremony at more than one temple.

the *jagamohan* (the raised, stage-like area before the sanctum) performing preliminary purificatory rites and prayers. He takes considerably more time with these largely meditative procedures than the priests would on regular worship days. He will be sitting directly behind the delicate Rādhāramaṇa image, holding him securely by the base to ensure that no damage occurs. Last-minute decorations are being hung in the temple, and Shrivatsa Gosvāmī (Bate Krishna Goswami’s nephew), who will be leading the procedure through the steps prescribed in the *Kṛṣṇajanmatīthividhi*, reviews the text and checks that necessary utensils and ingredients are in place. Massive quantities of milk have been delivered by local suppliers, and Yamunā water has been fetched in three large silver pots (in procession, with *kīrtana*).

When all is ready, at about ten o’clock the curtain before the *jagamohan* is pulled back to reveal Rādhāramaṇa already in position on a silver bathing platform, held in position from behind by Bate Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, and flanked by three or four other priests. Shrivatsa Gosvāmī sits to one side and directs procedures, book before him, and chants the prescribed Vedic mantras for each item offered.<sup>95</sup> After some preliminary worship, the bathing with milk and other substances begins and continues for three hours, as more and more priests arrive (in *dhotīs* more brightly coloured than on regular worship days) to take their turn in pouring the substances from conch shells, first over Rādhāramaṇa’s feet, then over his fully ornamented and dressed head and body. All the while the temple bell clangs, the sound of lively *kīrtana* from six or seven young men in the alcove opposite the *jagamohan* fills the temple building, as do increasing numbers of visitors who stand respectfully facing Rādhāramaṇa or circumambulate the temple slowly.

A mildly jubilant mood prevails, though the priests remain rather quiet, sober and conscientious in performing their duties or waiting their turns to bathe the deity. The crowd, however, becomes increasingly expressive, sometimes shouting out “Śrī Rādhāramaṇa-lāl kī jay!” with hands raised, as if trying to catch Rādhāramaṇa’s attention, as eager to be seen by him as to see him. But the highpoint comes at the end: Soon after the curtain closes, priests emerge to distribute the mixture of milk, honey, fruit juices, and other auspicious ingredients that had flowed over Rādhāramaṇa’s small, glistening black form to become *caraṇāmṛta*, to visitors holding out stainless

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<sup>95</sup> Shrivatsa Gosvāmī commented later that he follows the book closely, but occasionally “adds some spice” (some variation he considers pleasing to Rādhāramaṇa). In similar events in, for example, Śrīvaiṣṇava temples such as Śrīraṅgam, at least some priests would surely chant the appropriate mantras from memory.

steel cups and larger containers. The formality of the rite yields to abandon as the crowd surges forward, the priests pouring the precious liquid freely, filling containers and spilling the “feet-nectar” on the happily receptive devotees.

This is a festival of renewal not unlike *abhiṣekas* performed elsewhere throughout Vraja and beyond, whether to images of Kṛṣṇa or to other deities. What I wish to call attention to here is a sense of *totality* this performance offers in the process of reaffirming Rādhāramaṇa’s charisma. Along with the totality of sensory experience for both priests and onlooking devotees, there is the totality of “auspicious” substances poured in the *abhiṣeka*, all mingled to become a liquid, sweet-tasting, drinkable form of Rādhāramaṇa’s grace. Rādhāramaṇa’s *abhiṣeka* serves, if not to “dissolve differences” entirely, to draw multiplicity (of substances, activities, and social distinctions) within a unifying event that enacts in royal style the “ultimate sacred postulate” of Kṛṣṇa’s supremacy while simultaneously affirming *bhakti*’s efficacy in bringing divinity and devotee together in “sweet” intimacy.

### *II.2.5. Worship as Spectacle: Divine Play Made Tangible*

We have considered worship as enactment of “divine daily routine” and noted the centrality of food as an “art form” in sustaining the *bhakti* logos. We also saw how the public *abhiṣeka* of Rādhāramaṇa expands participation in the reaffirmation of charisma, noting how such a “performance” acts to elaborate elements of routine *sevā*. Another sort of worship expansion deserves mention, entering further the sphere of performance in one innovative effort to enact image worship as participation in divine *līlā*. We now step outside the Rādhāramaṇa temple proper to view a staging of daily worship by one Rādhāramaṇa priest family especially active in promoting the arts related to Kṛṣṇa worship.<sup>96</sup> The *aṣṭayāma-līlā* performance staged in November 2001 by this family at the Caitanya Prem Samsthan was a grandiose unfolding of Kṛṣṇa *mūrti-sevā* as a “day in the life” spread over eight days, each per-

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<sup>96</sup> See Case (2000: *passim*) on the family headed by Puruṣottama Gosvāmī and their efforts to promote Vraja devotional art traditions. Also see *ibid.*, pp. 111-50 for a description of performances of *aṣṭayāma-līlā* under this family’s auspices in 1989, 1992 and 1995.

formance beginning at the appropriate time of day for the particular “watch” (*yāma*) being depicted.<sup>97</sup>

Being a performance of Kṛṣṇa’s daily routine, “events” of his day followed in sequence familiar to the audience, and “plot” amounted to the same described above in relation to daily worship in the temple where, as on this occasion, the “theme” was the intimacy of Vraja’s *mādhurya-rasa* framed in the plenty and honourific propriety reminiscent of royal splendour.

This performance differed from those of Rāslilā theatre troupes common in Vraja, in which young male actors costumed as Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa, and their associates, sing and act out their roles from a repertoire of Kṛṣṇa-lilā episodes. In this case, silver *mūrtis* of Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa, and Balarāma were served and occasionally carried about, ever so slowly and reverentially, by (male) priest members of the family, much as they would be attended in the temple.<sup>98</sup> But unlike the temple setting where much occurs behind closed curtain, on this occasion viewers were treated to see every aspect of the worship, one *tableau vivant* following another with running rhapsodic musical commentary by musicians of the Svāmī Fatehkṛṣṇa Rāsmaṇḍali.<sup>99</sup>

To describe one such tableau: in the late afternoon, when Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma have returned home from cowherding, they enjoy their evening meal. As the musicians describe the goings on in Vrajabhāṣā lyrics, the priests set plates of each freshly prepared dish before the Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma *mūrtis*. Two of the musicians, amidst the singing, impersonate the two heroes as they “taste” and judge each food preparation. For example, Balarāma exclaims to Kṛṣṇa, “Ah! These *rasagullas* are wonderful indeed! Bring more! Bring more!” at which, to the delight of the audience, the priests must hasten to satisfy the divine whim. In another scene, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma become worshippers, offering *āratī* to Lord Nārāyaṇa in the form of a śālagrāma stone,

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<sup>97</sup> Each day the performance lasted roughly three hours, the first beginning at 3:00 a.m., the second at 6:00 a.m., etc. The venue was at Jaisingh Ghera, five minute’s walk from the Rād-hāramaṇa temple compound.

<sup>98</sup> These *mūrtis*, I was told, were normally being worshipped within this family’s household.

<sup>99</sup> This type of performance could be compared to the *jhāṅkī* tradition of Mathurā, in which costumed *svarūps* (young boys dressed as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, or as Sītā and Rāma) take up unmoving positions to be viewed and sung to by devotees. In discussing this performance tradition, Norvin Hein (1972: 17-18) notes, “Jhāṅkī thrives in a little frequented frontier of representational art where drama and image worship meet. Most of the activities that go on during an evening of jhāṅkī are similar to those that take place in the course of *pūjā* in a temple.”

after which they are entertained by dancers and jugglers (live performers, from among the musicians).

This particular performance was one creative attempt to reflect on the practice of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* as a process of invoking participation in Kṛṣṇa *līlā* framed within the context of daily routine. The ordinary was made quite thoroughly extraordinary through artful elaboration and synaesthetic experience, such that both the ordinary routine of devotional practice was stretched and extended to allow *darśanam* of the extraordinary “routine” of Kṛṣṇa *līlā*.

### II.2.6. More on Performance: Seeing Kṛṣṇa in Music

Whether in special performances such as the above, or in scheduled festivals, or during daily temple worship, music and singing is an invariable presence. It would be the greatest folly to neglect the importance of song in Rādhāramaṇa’s worship, for it is the quintessential activity for the evocation of *bhakti* and celebration of Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti*. Selina Thielemann, writing on the Vraja temple music tradition, notes, “The two-fold nature of music, acknowledged by the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, is expressed in music and song being both a tool to attain devotion and the expression of devotion once it has been attained” (Thielemann: 158). She notes further,

[Music] is the most spontaneous expression of man’s emotional experience of the divine, the highest expression of *bhakti* in the human realm. Being non-touchable yet conceivable by the senses, non-material yet omnipresent in the nature, music comes closest to the transcendentality of the spiritual realm, yet emanates from the mundane level. (ibid., 157)

That sung texts are important is also architecturally attested in the Rādhāramaṇa temple courtyard: the walls of the two side alcoves are covered with marble panels engraved with Vrajabhāṣā songs. But these are only a fraction of the full repertoire, which includes songs written by members of the Rādhāramaṇa community and by Vaiṣṇava poets in the wider Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition, but also by poets of the wider Vraja traditions of Vaiṣṇavism.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> According to Shrivatsa Goswami (interview, 9-11-01), the *samāja* tradition in Vraja is notable for its non-sectarianism amongst the Kṛṣṇa temple traditions. However, see Thielemann on elements of both integration and exclusion in regard to the Rādhāramaṇa temple music tradition. Oddly, unlike other temples in Vrindavan, Rādhāramaṇa temple does not maintain a printed collection of songs considered appropriate for temple use, available for temple-goers. I was surprised when told by one leading Goswami that the temple managing

Thus accompanying *mūrti-sevā* is *samāja-sevā*—service in the form of music performed by trained artists who are either themselves Rādhāramaṇa Goswamis or otherwise closely connected to the Rādhāramaṇa community. Sitting in the back alcove of the temple courtyard facing Rādhāramaṇa, these musicians simultaneously represent the assembly of worshippers (whose worship activity consists of listening to or possibly joining in the singing) and the most intimate associates of Kṛṣṇa, in the performance of *their* service to the divine couple:

*Vrindaban is always filled with the tones of vina, drum, and cymbals—  
Lalitā, Viśakhā, and Rūpamañjarī press out the mood.*<sup>101</sup>

In the course of this chapter I have tangentially indicated some of the subject matter of *samāja-gāyana* (devotional temple singing) from short song excerpts. Not surprisingly, the full range of subject matter covers everything to do with Kṛṣṇa's Vraja *līlā*, but also (as we saw in some of the songs quoted), with performance of Kṛṣṇa's services according to the formalities of temple worship. As both expression of devotional experience and evocation of devotional emotion, the ultimate achievement pursued through temple music is to blur and finally remove the distinction between temple service and service in the transcendent realm. Indeed, some songs express longing on the part of the poet/singer to become elevated to a position of permanent direct service to Kṛṣṇa, engaged in precisely the same service activities the worshipper of Kṛṣṇa's image performs daily:

*In a solitary place at Govardhana, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are relaxing, reclining on the spring turf. I will accompany Lalitā and Viśakhā<sup>102</sup> to serve Their lotus feet, which offers one the benediction of divine bliss.*

*I will prepare tāmbulā scented with camphor and betel-nuts in a golden box and offer the betel to Their lotus mouths. I will then bring tinkling ankle bells bedecked with jewels and put them on Their feet.*

*I will also make a paste of fragrant sandalwood in a golden bowl and apply it on Their bodies. I will position myself on the left side of my guru, who is also a sakhī. I will take up the cāmara and fan the threefold bending form of the Lord.*

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committee would not likely be interested in producing such a volume, but that if I would do the work of compilation, he, the particular Goswami, would see to it that it be published!

<sup>101</sup> Shapiro 1979: 36. *Pragatotsava VII*. Shapiro explains "press out the mood:" "Literally, pressing out the *rās* or juice, which I have translated as 'mood'—they are playing very sweetly, to enhance the divine pastimes." Less directly, the pressing of juice image could also allude to *yajña* performance, in which the pressing of *soma* juice is often central.

<sup>102</sup> Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's two closest *gopī* friends.

*I will gaze longingly at Their lotus eyes, causing me to be overcome with shivering due to ecstasy. Then I will reach out to touch Their lotus feet with my hands. This desire always keeps appearing in my mind. So, Narottama Dāsa begs to be a servant of the servant of Lord Caitanya (Prārthanā 11, Narottamadāsa, 49).<sup>103</sup>*

The types of activities described here are standard services offered to the temple image. Creativity is expressed here not in the sense of originality but in the sense of *making manifest*, through desire and musical expression of desire, the longed-for ideal situation. For listening and observing *bhaktas*, this in combination with the actual execution of the services described in the temple to the visible image, creatively ornamented in an abundant flower setting, makes actual and immediate what would otherwise be theoretical and remote, namely the possibility to serve and associate directly with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

### *II.2.7 The Wider Picture: Rādhāramaṇa Worship in a Changing World*

I began this chapter with the story of Rādhāramaṇa's appearance and the founding of his temple. Another type of "beginning" for the Rādhāramaṇa community—as for all residents of the subcontinent—occurred as British colonial rule prevailed in the nineteenth century. Inevitably changes would come to Vrindavan that would affect Rādhāramaṇa temple life, with increasing pilgrimage activity and resultant increasing temple patronage (Entwistle: 213-19). Not surprisingly, Rādhāramaṇa goswamis looked with satisfaction on a protective and prosperity-bringing British Raj, as evidenced in two telling photographs of Rādhāramaṇa dated 1916.

One photograph shows Rādhāramaṇa out on the *jagamohan* platform poised in the open doorway of a "railroad train" constructed from split banana-tree trunks and decorated with flowers (*phul-baṅgalā*). The second photograph shows the *ṭhākura* aboard a temple-width-long "battleship," complete with "cannons," on the side of which is an inscription confessing First World War British patriotism: "May God Bless Our Emperor With Victory."<sup>104</sup> The message of both displays is clear: "Even modernity, in its varied manifestations, is part of Rādhāramaṇa's *līlā*."

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<sup>103</sup> As Thielemann points out, *samāja-gāyana* in Rādhāramaṇa temple consists almost entirely of songs in Vrajabhāṣā. This song, although in Bengali, would certainly be honoured, being a work of Narottamadāsa, the celebrated friend of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's disciple Śrīnivāsa. But my own impression is that it would be sung by the Bengali or Oriyan ascetics who do service and congregate at the *samādhi-mandira* of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa.

<sup>104</sup> Both photographs are in the possession of Padmanabh Goswami.

If Rādhāramaṇa could accommodate and embrace modern technology and warfare, his priests could also show openness to European ideas more broadly. One sampling from an outspoken Rādhāramaṇa goswami's pen indicates that times were indeed changing.

In 1887 Rādhācaraṇa Gosvāmī (1859-1925) wrote and published a twenty-six page tract in Hindi entitled *Videś Yātrā Vicār* ("Viewpoint on Foreign Travel"), expressing his disgust at persistent Indian backward-mindedness fostered by "a few stubborn, selfish brahmins who are enemies of the country."<sup>105</sup> According to his analysis, as brahmins made the country defenseless against invaders by their preoccupations with *muhūrta* (auspicious moment, according to astrological calculation), so they had allowed India to slide culturally backward on the plea of maintaining caste purity.<sup>106</sup> In the main body of his tract Rādhācaraṇa refutes ten possible objections to travelling beyond India, mostly having to do with the supposed dangers of losing one's dharmic purity (determined largely by diet and association) and therefore one's caste. In his introduction Rādhācaraṇa is ascerbic in his accusations against "zealous brahmins:"

Who was it who kept the common people from reading Sanskrit? . . . Who was it, proclaiming "Kali-yuga, Kali-yuga!" who sent our country progressively to hell? Who was it, having us eat *haviṣya* (sacrificial food), who made us into sheep and goats?<sup>107</sup> . . . And indeed! Which group of scheming, cunning, ignorant rogues, depriving us of ocean travel, have made us black-faced (shameful) in our own cultivated society? It is this, this very bunch of zealous brahmins who want to destroy everything, cheating us Hindus in the name of *dharma* with fear of the next life. Alas (*hā hanta*)! Alas!! Alas!!!

It is noteworthy that a Rādhāramaṇa goswami spoke out for social reforms championed by Hindu reformers of the time. Although Rādhācaraṇa may have been an atypical Rādhāramaṇa goswami, I mention this author and his tract to lead us into the next chapter, where we will shift and widen our focus to Caitanya Vaiṣṇava dis-

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<sup>105</sup> Rādhācaraṇa Gosvāmī was a prolific writer who, I am told, was widely published and read in north India. It is also noteworthy that he was the son of Guṇamañjarī Gosvāmī, whom we met in the previous chapter as the author of the Rādhāramaṇa temple worship manual, *Nitya-sevā Mañjarī*. See Tathādī, a doctoral thesis (in Hindi) on Rādhācaraṇa's life and works.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. comments by the more well-known reformer, Rammohun Roy, from a letter dated January 18, 1828: "The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and subdivisions among them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise" (quoted in Sharma 2002: 40). Also cf. Vivekananda, whose scorn for the brahmins for similar reasons is discussed by Halbfass (1988: 236).

<sup>107</sup> This question is ironic, in that sheep and goats are standard sacrificial animals.

course on worship in light of modernity's challenges.<sup>108</sup> It also serves to remind us that Kṛṣṇa worship in Vrindavan, while engaging Kṛṣṇa devotees with a transcendent dimension beyond mundane space and time, was and is occurring in a world of empirical space, time, and therefore history. This truth has continually forced Kṛṣṇa *bhaktas* to reflect on how, if this world's ways are all unfolding as part of Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*, they should best respond to changing times while preserving sacred tradition.

### II.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have introduced, as one context of Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇava image worship practice in an “embodied community,” one particular Kṛṣṇa temple in Vrindavan functioning from the mid-sixteenth century to the present. I have considered this temple in terms of inception, perpetuation, and renewal of image worship as a complex *expression* of religious truth articulated through the appearance narrative of the Rādhāramaṇa image; through multiple divine identities associated with that image; through routine practices related to worship of the image; and through elaborations and innovations of the routine practices of Rādhāramaṇa's worship.

I have also indicated some ways how the textual corpus introduced in the first chapter provides provisional patterns informing and supporting Rādhāramaṇa's worship. As we have seen, this canon is not closed; rather, it has been extended and particularised in more recent prescription and poetry, tailored to fit the new embodiment of *bhakti* that Rādhāramaṇa became in the particular circumstances of a pilgrimage centre gaining importance in early- through late-modern north India. Yet all the particularities of Rādhāramaṇa's history and worship are embedded in and derive meaning from a devotional vocabulary of text and ritual in wide currency. Not surprisingly, Rādhāramaṇa participates in “dialogue” with other divinities and their communities, even when his own community members may not be consciously participating in such exchange.

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<sup>108</sup> Margaret Case (1995: 49-50) notes that Rādhācaraṇa Gosvāmī was initially disciplined by his seniors for studying English in the 1870's and had to give it up. He was also criticized for starting an English style literary magazine, which he similarly had to abandon; more criticism came from Rādhāramaṇa goswamis when he wrote articles promoting reform in the journal *Hindubandhav*. When, however, a dishonest accountant sued the Rādhāramaṇa goswamis in court, it was Rādhācaraṇa, with his English knowledge, who successfully defended them in the 1880's, somewhat reconciling his activities to his relatives.

Rādhāramaṇa also “dialogues,” or interacts, with the canonical texts themselves. As source and sharer of charisma, Rādhāramaṇa is not in simple opposition to canon; nor does charisma merely affirm textual canon since for his worshippers Rādhāramaṇa can be a playful and unpredictable Lord, now upholding, now questioning *sāstra* (sacred text) to affirm the ultimacy of *bhakti*, divine/human relationality. Indeed relationality is a central aim of devotional practice, and Rādhāramaṇa worshippers (whether priests or temple visitors) will invariably show some effort to demonstrate relationality or exchange with the Rādhāramaṇa *mūrti*. Whether such demonstration manifests in the form of the Rādhāramaṇa appearance narrative (a demonstration of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa’s depth of devotion) or in performing the worship duties prescribed for the temple priests, or in the routine act of visiting the temple for *darśanam* to see and be seen by Rādhāramaṇa, pursuit of relationality binds the varied practices together and maintains elasticity in the liturgical order as practitioners balance *vidhi* and *rāga* within the *bhakti* logos.

To speak of both charisma and canon is to speak of religious authority, that which, for a given person or community, conveys or accredits religious *expression*. As Neville and Wildman have noted (2001: 162-65), the generic opposite of expressive truth is *deceit*, and for the faithful, precisely this is absent from, or assumed to be absent from, the embodiments of authority accepted. The narrative of Rādhāramaṇa’s appearance provides, for practitioners (for whom the narrative is beyond question), a demonstration of the truth of the body of texts constituting the textual tradition in which Gopāla Bhaṭṭa and his associates lived. It also provides assurance that following their path may lead to success in one’s own practice of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*. Even failing to observe *sāstric* injunctions perfectly, one is still blessed by the presence of Rādhāramaṇa, accessible to view several periods of the day.

Indeed, *failure* or potential failure is a prominent issue in devotional practice. One might ask how successful the Rādhāramaṇa temple has been in facilitating the cultivation and embodiment of *bhakti* (the cultivation and embodiment of truth, as conceived in the *bhakti* logos) in its community or beyond. Since *failure* is the opposite of truth as cultivation and embodiment (Neville and Wildman, *ibid.*), this question deserves attention, albeit in a different study involving careful setting of judgment criteria, extensive interviewing, and possibly statistics-gathering, all beyond the scope of this thesis. Even without such data-gathering, the very persistence of the

temple over more than four centuries and its present popularity may be viewed as indications of at least a collective success.

I have touched the subject of success versus failure with respect to the “digital” and “analogue” measures of qualification, noting the importance of the former for the perpetuation of the Rādhāramaṇa community. In the next chapter we will explore ways that a much broader and encompassing “dialogue,” or discourse with modernity, takes place in the wider Caitanyaite community, responding to modernity’s challenges in part with a new emphasis on the “analogue” dimension of qualification. As we will see in chapter three, the discourse of universalism will place considerable importance on elements of practice as the means for establishing devotional relationality, *and* divine grace will be emphasized as being accessible through the divine names and divine forms.

Yet for a study of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship as it moves into the wider, modern world, the Rādhāramaṇa temple provides a useful and illuminating reference point. This is not to say that it represents some absolute norm by which to measure either other Caitanyaite temples or other practices; rather, because of its history, identity, and location, it serves to orient us while filling out the picture of *mūrti-sevā* in a wider sphere.

## PART TWO: Missionizing Truth

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Kṛṣṇa's New Look: A Worship Tradition Faces West

##### III.0. INTRODUCTION

The Rādhāramaṇa temple sketch of the previous chapter might give the impression of a community looking mainly to the past as its source of self-understanding about its worship practices. Even taking into account the samples of Vrajabhāṣā poetry and the worship manual of relatively recent origin, the main themes of temple establishment and worship style hark back to early times, represented largely by Sanskrit (especially purāṇic and *smṛti*) texts. As one might expect in such a tradition-laden community, those texts reflect a sense of non-changing continuity with a past suspended in the present largely by those very texts.<sup>1</sup> But as we saw at the end of chapter two with a short textual counter-example from within the Rādhāramaṇa community, in the widening horizon created by British imperial presence, renewal would not remain restricted to mere priestly creativity within the temple sphere. Since the mid-nineteenth century there has been much writing activity within the wider Caitanyaite community indicating that profound changes were in the air and a need to respond to the West's challenges was felt. In this chapter I will show how, out of defensive, apologetic resistance to Western critique of caste and "idolatry" would grow the intellectual makings of outward-facing mission that would selectively embrace elements of modernity while defending revelatory Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* worship tradition as the fitting way to effect the spiritual reform of individuals.

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<sup>1</sup> One might be reminded of Mircea Eliade's notion that in traditional religion time has a "reversible" quality, whereby participants orient and identify themselves in terms of the eternal "time" of a central narrative or myth held sacred by the tradition (Paden: 339). This can be seen as a mode of *maintenance* of the religious "world" within which a particular temple and its community functions, for which texts serve an important role of reinforcement. See below, further discussion on maintenance, renewal, and reform as loci of change, of which tradition is a particular mode.

I will focus on writings of Kedarnath Bhaktivinoda (1838-1914) and his son Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī (1874-1936), two vocal Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas from Bengal, as they began to articulate Kṛṣṇa-universalism as a prelude to missionary activity beyond India while participating in the discourse of Hindu renaissance and resistance of their time.<sup>2</sup> Bhaktisiddhānta's student Bhaktivedanta Swami (1896-1977) will also enter our story, as he drafted his plan for international mission in the face of spiritual apathy at home.

These three figures together create a picture distinct from yet linked to the discourse of the better known revisionist Hindu movements such as the Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj, and the Ramakrishna Mission, or the several widely known revision ideologists who contributed significantly to it.<sup>3</sup> Two interrelated themes of that discourse, namely "idolatry" and caste, will concern us here.<sup>4</sup> Both the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj repudiated temple worship as one of several practices viewed as pernicious accretions to an otherwise glorious tradition generally conceived in terms of Advaita Vedānta. The Ramakrishna Mission (and Vedānta Societies), while accommodating image worship and *bhakti*, especially toward Goddess Kālī, subordinated these to a universalism based largely on Advaita Vedāntic ideology. In contrast to such movements, the Caitanyaites would insist on the importance of Kṛṣṇa worship as an image in a temple, as integral to the right and proper expression of *bhakti* as the universal, spiritually all-encompassing principle. Universalism, a notion common to both British colonial and Hindu reform discourse, would for Caitanyaites find expression in sacred texts (especially the BhP) seen through the teachings of their founder and his followers. But for them universalism would be complemented by particularism, in the very particular "all-attractive" form of Kṛṣṇa, the divine

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<sup>2</sup> See Dasa, S. N. (3-13) for an overview of Bhaktivinoda's significance in relation to the "Bengal Renaissance" and nineteenth century Bengal Vaiṣṇavism. See also T. Hopkins (1989) on Bhaktivinoda in the context of his family background in Bengal and his advantaged position under British rule. While it is imperative to keep aware of India's growing nationalist consciousness and move toward independence throughout the period under discussion in this chapter, as the socio-political backdrop to our story, explicit attention to this dimension will be minimal.

<sup>3</sup> The figures Arvind Sharma includes in his book *The Concept of Universal Religion in Modern Hindu Thought* (1998) constitute a representative list of the most prominent ones: Ram-mohun Roy, Devendranath Tagore, Keshub Chunder Sen, Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa, Swami Vivekānanda, Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Śrī Aurobindo, and S. Radhakrishnan.

<sup>4</sup> See Davis (1997: 88-89, 205-207) for a brief discussion of "idolatry" as a category of discourse, as part of Muslim military campaigns and later British consolidation of colonial control in India.

cowherd of Vrindavan, as the ultimate object of spiritual aspiration for all human beings. A correlate to such universalism would be a reformulated ancient theme of *adhikāra* (qualification, competence), such that spiritual (*paramārthika*) supercedes mundane (*vyavahārika*) qualification.

The differences between mainstream reformers and Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇavas regarding image worship should not obscure points of convergence, especially regarding the excesses of caste-brahmanism. But whereas some vocal currents of reform favoured abolishment of caste altogether, Caitanya's modern followers championed spiritual reform as the key to human elevation. Again, these ideas had their family resemblances in later modern representations of Hindu thought.

In calling attention to Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇava participation in the wider discourse of Hindu renaissance, resistance, and reform, it is fitting to invoke the ill-defined yet important abstraction "modernity," as that to which, in large measure, "Hinduism" was and still is responding. The complex currents of modernity delivered and perpetuated by British colonial presence brought equally complex responses from Hindu communities and individuals. Notably, Hindu revitalization along with growing self-consciousness has occurred (and continues to do so today) largely as a result of profound changes subsumed under the rubric of "modernity" (Smith 2003: 4-6; Killingley 2003: 509-25).

That Hindu traditions have experienced revitalization in the currents of modernity might be a cause for wonder, especially if "tradition" is seen as modernity's opposite. But such a simple dichotomy will prove unhelpful, as several scholars have shown (Waldman: 318-26). More helpful may be, as Marilyn Waldman suggests, to consider three positive stances adopted by a religious tradition—*maintenance*, *renewal*, and *reform*—as loci of change, of which tradition itself is a modality.<sup>5</sup> One can then consider how these three stances overlap and inform each other in complex ways. Modernity is not thereby to be ignored, but neither can it be so easily typified in dichotomous language, of "universal commitments over local ties, individual over

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<sup>5</sup> See Waldman, p. 331-34 and *passim*. Her approach is to recognise "the pliability and elasticity of tradition(s) in the face of the kind of change we call modernization" and thus to "avoid polarizing modernity and tradition" (327). "Renewing a religious tradition, or some small part of it, means literally breaking into the tradition at some point in the past and bringing that point forward or making it present. *Maintaining* involves trying to conserve intact traditions that have survived in the modern era without interruption, allowing change to take place within their parameters. *Reforming* means rethinking or reformulating a tradition so as to make it more authentic and at the same time more modern" (332-34).

group, choice over birth, youth over age, achievement over ascription, mastery over fatalism, truths of science over truths of the emotions.”<sup>6</sup> Without undue distraction by yet another set of categories, in this chapter we can see how efforts at maintenance, renewal and reform interweave to bring about a new missionary spirit among Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas.

An additional concept drawn from Roy Rappaport’s work on ritual theory will have bearing on this and the next chapter. This is Rappaport’s five “features of the divine,” whereby the divine is one of four constituents of the Holy, the one that signifies the Holy’s spiritual referents.<sup>7</sup> To quote Rappaport:

I would suggest that notions of the divine typically have at least five features. First, although divine objects may be incarnated, the quality of the divine itself is not material in any ordinary sense. Secondly, the divine exists, or, rather, “has being.” It is not deemed to be, simply, a law, like the laws of thermodynamics, or an abstraction, like truth, but a being, like Zeus. Thirdly, it is powerful, or efficacious. It has the ability to cause effects. Fourth, it is something like alive. It possesses something like vitality. To use Rudolph Otto’s term, it is “urgent.” Fifth, it is rationally incomprehensible. (Ibid., 396-97)

We shall have occasion to consider arguments for the divinity of “*śrī-mūrti*,” the divine image, in terms of these five features which, as Rappaport points out, includes an element of non-rationality. The truth-as-expression which is the divine image is only partially justified epistemologically, a justification which does not “seem bound by any rules of empirical reference” (ibid., 399).

I will first focus on writings of Kedarnath Bhaktivinoda. Bhaktivinoda addresses his compatriots, the educated *bhadralok*, as well as his own Vaiṣṇava community, and argues against Brahma Samaj revisionist ideas in favour of a deepened understanding of the BhP allowing a limited place for modern rationalism and a recovery of respectability for Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas through proper practice, *śaraṇāgati*. This meant defending their practice of image worship, as well as clarifying their relationship to the *varṇāśrama* system. Next, I will examine writings of Bhaktisiddhānta elaborating on the same themes, especially as he upholds Vaiṣṇava initiation prac-

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 321, citing Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 3. n. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Rappaport’s three other constituents are: the “sacred,” signifying the discursive aspect of religion, that which can be expressed in language; the “numinous,” the non-discursive, affective, ineffable dimension of religion; and the “occult,” or religion’s “peculiar efficacious capacities.” Rappaport argues that these four constituents of religion achieve integration through ritual (Rappaport: 23-24).

tices supported in HBV against *smārta* and Vaiṣṇava descendent (*santāna*) insistence on authority based on birthright, and subordinates the pāñcarātric “path” emphasizing *arcanam* to the bhāgavata “path” emphasizing *kīrtanam*. Third, I will introduce Bhaktisiddhānta’s student Bhaktividānta Swami Prabhupāda during his years prior to leaving India for America, to show how his writings suggest further preparation for Kṛṣṇa’s move west, as reflections on the transcultural nature of the truth of “Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” Finally, I will consider how these three participated in the revisionist Hindu and Western discourse on universalism with a “particularist” Caitanyaite approach.

### III.1. BHAKTIVINODA: CONTOURS OF RENEWAL AND REFORM

#### III.1.1. *Recovering Respectability: Doing Caitanyaite Theology among the Bhadrakok of Bengal*

Our account of modern revisionist/resistant thought in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism begins slightly before Rādhācaraṇa’s 1887 tract, quoted in the previous chapter. In 1869 a recently appointed Deputy Magistrate, Kedarnath Datta (later to become honoured by Vaiṣṇavas with the name Bhaktivinoda),<sup>8</sup> delivered a speech in English in Dinajpur (northern Bengal) that he later published as a pamphlet, *The Bhāgavata: Its Philosophy, Ethics, and Theology* (hereafter, *The Bhāgavata*).<sup>9</sup> This pamphlet would be the first of several of his writings—mainly in Bengali but also in English and Sanskrit—to revive Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism and defend it against its learned despisers among the *bhadrakok* (British educated Bengalis), particularly the followers of Ram-

<sup>8</sup> It is noteworthy that Bhaktivinoda received this honorific title in 1887 from the Bāghnāpādā Vaiṣṇavas, just after he had spent a prodigious year of publishing. (Dasa, S. N.: 100-102)

<sup>9</sup> To contextualise this speech: In his autobiography Bhaktivinoda notes the atmosphere of conflict between Hindus and “Brahmos” in Dinajpur, that the Hindus were “endeavoring to put the Brahmos out of their caste,” that he refused the Brahmos’ invitation to join their camp and rather accepted an invitation from local Hindus to a meeting to form their own society. It was at this meeting that he delivered this talk. He estimates how it was received: “A few *sahibs* heard the lecture and were impressed.” (Shukavak Dāsa trans. *Sva-likhita-jīvanī*, para. 244).

Halbfass (1988: 218) lists Bhaktivinoda among outspoken Indians exemplifying a varied range of early responses to the West, who tried “to articulate or reinterpret the meaning and identity of the Hindu tradition in the modern world.” He lists Bhaktivinoda as one of “numerous Vaiṣṇava reformers and universalists.” See also Sen (1979: 84-85) on the several Hindu writers who, toward the end of the nineteenth century, explored ways to update and universalise Hinduism.

mohan Roy (1772/74-1833). The essential message of *The Bhāgavata* is that Hindu reformers, bent on keeping up with modern times and ideas, would do well not to disparage the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, but rather to school themselves in its wisdom by approaching it with a spirit of open-minded inquiry.<sup>10</sup> Given such openness (of the “true critic”, as opposed to the “foolish critic” or the “shallow reader”), the divisiveness and sectarianism prevailing among Bengali intelligentsia could be allayed and Truth could be positively and successfully pursued. Bhaktivinoda’s defense of the BhP deserves our attention considering how central it is to Caitanya Vaiṣṇava life and worship. He identifies three obstacles to the work’s appreciation which echoed themes already long in currency, now amplified by the modern *zeitgeist*. These obstacles represent the three types of opposites to religious truth, namely failure, deceit, and error.

The first obstacle was simple lack of time or determination to study the BhP. In terms of cultivating truth, this was an obstacle in the attaining of success in religious practice (Neville and Wildman 2001c: 165-66). Bhaktivinoda acknowledges the difficulty to understand the BhP’s often obscure Sanskrit style, but reminds his readers that challenges to comprehension are to be expected of a profound philosophical work. One must, he urges, accept the help of learned commentators to properly understand it: “The best commentator is Śrīdhara Svāmī and the truest interpreter is our great and noble Caitanyadeva. God bless the spirit of our noble guides” (Dasa, S. N.: 280-81).<sup>11</sup> A recurring theme for Bhaktivinoda is the need for guidance from “exalted souls,” commentators and interpreters able to impart “training of the soul in the elements of religion.” Another recurring theme is *adhikāra-bheda*, graded practice and qualification in accordance with graded understanding. Distinguishing “simpler” from “higher Truths,” he urges his readers to be both well-versed in the “alphabet of

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<sup>10</sup> The greatest icon of reform for nineteenth-century Bengali Hindus was, of course, Rammohan Roy. As such, and at the same time as one who “neglected” the BhP and Caitanya’s BhP-informed Vaiṣṇavism, it is he whom Bhaktivinoda singles out by name for criticism. While acknowledging Roy as a “great genius” Bhaktivinoda laments his neglect of the *Bhāgavatam* in favour of Advaita Vedānta and “the Unitarian form of the Christian faith, converted into an Indian appearance” (Dasa, S. N.: 261). Roy’s supposed “neglect” of the BhP did not mean that he didn’t know of it; rather, he discounts its authority in a short work, *Gosvāmīr sahita vicār* (Killingley 1982: 32-45). This section draws from my article (Kṛṣṇa Kṣetra Dāsa, 1999) “Reform in Tradition: Bhaktivinoda’s Apologetic for the *Bhāgavata Purāna*.”

<sup>11</sup> Śrīdhara Svāmī is estimated to have written his commentary around 1325 (Sheridan 1986: 118). Bhaktivinoda’s plea for the need to take proper guidance in studying the BhP echoes Rammohan Roy, for whom “the venerable Manu . . . has explained the meaning of the whole Veda in his law book” (Killingley 1982: 32).

religion” (e.g. ethical principles) and in the “precepts of true religion.” As mathematics can be comprehended progressively, so “[a]ll higher Truths, although intuitive, require previous education in the simpler ones (Dasa, S. N.: 277-78).”

But while there may be no harm in keeping to basic arithmetical knowledge, to fail to make appropriate effort to understand higher philosophical or religious truth is to join those who degrade great ideas of reformers (such as the “Saviour of Jerusalem” and the “Saviour of Nadia”) into something they never intended.<sup>12</sup> The exalted nature of the BhP can be properly appreciated, and its teachings can be used to advantage, if one reads it in a genuinely reformist spirit like that of Vyāsa, whose dissatisfaction with his own previous writings led him to compile the work in question.<sup>13</sup>

Granting one might strive earnestly and with appropriate guidance to comprehend the BhP, a second admissible problem was the presence of apparently non-rational elements.<sup>14</sup> Here the question relates to religious truth as expression, and its opposite, deceit (Neville and Wildman 2001c: 164-65). Readers schooled in Enlightenment rationalism might be put off by certain passages “created by the rulers of the country in order to check the evil deeds of ignorant people who are not able to understand the conclusions of philosophy” (Dasa, S. N.: 274). Bhaktivinoda clearly rates his own readers above those for whom these “poetical” statements are intended. Graphic descriptions of heavens and hells meant for such unsophisticated readers should not obscure for his own readers the enduring truth behind them, namely that future rewards and punishments are the results of one’s past and present deeds.<sup>15</sup>

If the BhP accommodates unsophisticated readers with admonishments and enticements, it does so in a pragmatic spirit: They are “statements borrowed from other works in the way of preservation of old traditions in the book which superseded them and put an end to the necessity of their storage” (ibid.). Even if such passages embarrass the modern ear as archaic survivals, they cannot overshadow the BhP’s greatness, but rather lend to its completeness: “If the whole stock of Hindu theologi-

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<sup>12</sup> The “Saviour of Nadia” refers to Caitanya, who grew up in the Bengal district of Nadia.

<sup>13</sup> See BhP 1.4 and 1.5 on Vyāsa’s dissatisfaction and instruction by Nārada.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. John Muir’s Christian challenge to Hinduism, the *Mataparikṣā* 5.44-50 (synopsis by R. F. Young, 77): “The Puranas are mixed with much that is unbecoming. Their accounts, supposedly true, are simply embellishments of poets. Their authors did not see miraculous events with their own eyes, and people now believe those stories merely on the authority of their authors.”

<sup>15</sup> Here Bhaktivinoda seems quite in accord with Rammohan Roy’s hermeneutic principle that much in purāṇic literature must be taken non-literally. See Killingley (1982: 33, 45).

cal works which preceded the *Bhāgavata* were burnt like the Alexandrian library and the sacred *Bhāgavata* preserved as it is, not a part of the philosophy of the Hindus except that of the atheistic sects, would be lost.”<sup>16</sup>

Even if faulty reading is averted and archaic contents are excused, there remained a third, more serious obstacle to proper appreciation of the BhP. If Kṛṣṇa is taken as the supreme divinity, *bhagavān* himself, as the BhP proclaims, how does this square with his questionable moral character as a lover of many female companions? Here the issue relates to religious truth as epistemological truth versus falsehood (Neville and Wildman 2001c: 163-64), and how acceptance of a falsehood can lead to inappropriate practice. The *bhadralok*'s Victorian British education, despite infusion with Protestant Christian hostility to Hindu texts and practices, resonated nonetheless with orthodox Hindu restrictive sexual norms.<sup>17</sup> Thus educated Bengalis were likely to embrace the view that the BhP served to justify lascivious lifestyles and hence was an embarrassment to Indian pious society anxious to link itself with Western thought and status. Bhaktivinoda, fully in accord with upholding conservative sexual norms, was vehement in the BhP's defense: “Vyāsa, who could teach us repeatedly in the whole of the *Bhāgavata* that sensual pleasures are momentary like the pleasures of rubbing the itching hand, and that man's highest duty is to have spiritual Love with God, could never have prescribed the worship of sensual pleasures” (Dasa, S. N.: 277). Here the fault was not the book in question, nor the identity of Kṛṣṇa as *bhagavān*, but again the unqualified reader, the “shallow critic” who “would go so far as to scandalize [Vyāsa] as a teacher of material love and lust” (ibid., 276).

In 1869, when Bhaktivinoda wrote this tract, it had been less than a decade since the widely publicised infamous Maharaj Libel Case in Bombay had ruled against a leader of the Vallabhite Vaiṣṇava community.<sup>18</sup> It is not unlikely that he

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<sup>16</sup> With these comments Bhaktivinoda may have consciously or unconsciously parodied Thomas Macaulay, the author of *Minute on Education* (1835). For the latter, who despised India's sacred writings, “a single shelf of European books was infinitely more valuable than all the books of India” and “Hinduism, with its mythical geography of seas of milk and treacle, was . . . a joke” (Smith 2003: 76-77).

<sup>17</sup> See Hatcher, 132, 159, 176, 242-48, on the traditional brahmanical value of *indriyajaya* (self-restraint) and its renewed popularisation through Rammohan Roy, Rāmchandra Vidyāvāgīś, and Īśvaracandra Vidyāsāgara in the nineteenth century.

<sup>18</sup> Like the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava community, the followers of Vallabha 1479-1531 were and are presently concentrated in Vraja, the greater Vrindavan area, and similarly worship Kṛṣṇa in his Vrindavan *līlā*.

was aware of the case and the judgment of the presiding judge Sir Arnould, whose views became known from newspaper articles throughout India:

It is Krishna, the darling of the 16,000 Gopees, Krishna the love-hero—the husband of the 16,000 princesses—who is the paramount object of Vallabhacharya’s worship. This tinges the whole system (of Hinduism) with the stain of carnal sensualism, of strange, transcendental lewdness” (Haberman 1994: 89).<sup>19</sup>

Kṛṣṇa worship was getting bad press. Even if the first two obstacles to reading the BhP might be overcome, the view that it celebrates a divinity of questionable character weighed heavily against its acceptance by revisionist Hindus. Already some decades earlier Rammohan Roy had written scathingly,

[Kṛṣṇa’s] worship is made to consist in the institution of his image or picture, accompanied by one or more females, and in the contemplation of his history and behaviour, such as . . . his compelling a great number of married and unmarried women to stand before him denuded; his debauching them and several others . . . His devotees very often personify (in the same manner as European actors upon stages do) him and his female companions, dancing with indecent gestures, and singing songs relative to his love and debaucheries. (Sharma 2002: 48)

For Bhaktivinoda, such dismissive words showed utter misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the BhP, stemming from misinterpretation of the truth of Kṛṣṇa’s Vrindavan *līlā*. The last sentence could well be an accurate description of decadent practices in the name of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, wrongly attributed by Roy to Kṛṣṇa’s “devotees.”<sup>20</sup> But such behaviour would stem from the same sort of misinterpretation as that in which Roy indulged.

Beginning with *The Bhāgavata* and continuing in several later works Bhaktivinoda shows concern to distinguish authentic from inauthentic practice and precept

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<sup>19</sup> Haberman quotes from *Maharaj Libel Case* (Bombay: Bombay Gazette Press, 1862), p. 438.

<sup>20</sup> In the introduction to his 1893 Bengali song collection *Bāul Saṅgīt* (paraphrased by the translator, Bhaktivinoda 1994), Bhaktivinoda lists thirteen “*apasampradāyas*,” (deviant traditions) he considers misrepresentative of Caitanya and his tradition, as follows: *Āula*, *Bāula*, *Karttābhajā*, *Neḍā*, *Daraveśa*, *Sāni*, *Sahajiyā*, *Sakhībhekī*, *Smārta*, *Jāta-gosāni*, *Ativādī*, *Cūdādhārī*, and *Gaurāṅga-nāgarī*. *Bāul Saṅgīt* is a critique of some of their practices. See Shukavak Dasa, Ch. 9 (239-49) for a discussion of the proper and improper following of *rāgānuga-bhakti* according to Bhaktivinoda. See Chakravarti (238, fn. 1) on early lists of heretical groups according to Vṛndāvanadāsa, in the *Premavilāsa* of Nityānandadāsa, and in *Gauraganacandrikā* of Viśvanātha Cakravarti.

of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism.<sup>21</sup> One way he does this is by portraying what he considers exemplary Vaiṣṇava behaviour through fictional characterisation and narrative—in didactic “novels,” especially *Prema-pradīpa* (1886) and *Jaiva-dharma* (1893), or by means of didactic songs of his own composition in Bengali.<sup>22</sup> For example in *Prema-pradīpa* (Illumination of Divine Love) set in nineteenth-century Vraja, two representatives of Brahmo Samaj from Calcutta intent on converting Vaiṣṇavas residing in Govardhana (near Vrindavan) to “Brahmoism” are instead themselves converted to Caitanya’s fold by their Vaiṣṇava hosts. As the story unfolds, after several days’ exchanges with some senior Vaiṣṇava adepts, one Brahmo Samaji addresses his friend:

Naren Bābu said, “Anand Bābu! What do you think. For a long time we knew Vaiṣṇavism as most despicable (*nitānta heya*). Some debauchees turned Kṛṣṇa, the crest jewel of debauchees (*lampāta-cūḍāmaṇi*), into God. . . . Our own head teacher (*ācārya*) especially warned us many times about Kṛṣṇa. One day he said that the Vaiṣṇavas speak highly about devotional service, but actually they take the lusty affairs of men and women to be *bhakti*. He doesn’t see that there is a special propensity (*viśeṣa vṛtti*) which is known as *bhakti*. But seeing the Vaiṣṇavas’ devotional mood (*bhāva-bhaṅgī*) and listening to their instructions, so pregnant with knowledge (*tattva-garbha upadeśa*), I no longer feel disrespect towards them. What do you say? (1995: 31; 1951: 45-46).

The two wavering Brahmos then correspond with their Brahmo teacher, whose counter-arguments to Vaiṣṇavism no longer convince them after hearing the Vaiṣṇavas’ incisive responses. Toward the end of this short “spiritual novel” (*paramārthika upanyāsa*) the Govardhana Vaiṣṇavas, impressed by the sincere submissive attitude of the two “*bābus*” (gentlemen), award them a short lesson in *rasa-tattva*

<sup>21</sup> One of the most well known modernising writers, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894), serves as a notable comparison and contrast to Bhaktivinoda in this regard. In his study of Bhaktivinoda’s life and writings, Shukavak Dasa (following Paul Hacker) contrasts the neo-Hinduism of the more renowned Bankim Chandra with the traditionalism of Bhaktivinoda. Bankim Chandra responded to attacks on Kṛṣṇa’s character initially by simply excluding the questionable episodes from his 1884 *Kṛṣṇacarita* account of Kṛṣṇa’s *lilās*. Yet later he resorted to allegory, referring to Kṛṣṇa’s *rasa-lilā* in symbolic terms (Shukavak Dasa 88-89; 175 fn. 49). See Kaviraj (1998: Ch. 3) for an excellent discussion on *Kṛṣṇacarita* as the invention of a “classic tradition” by means of a single text.

Although Bhaktivinoda was prepared to allow the whole of Hindu theological writings prior to the BhP to disappear in flames, and to ignore as superfluous certain fantastic descriptions within the BhP, Kṛṣṇa in all his complexity was for Bhaktivinoda the substance of a tradition needing to be preserved and properly understood.

<sup>22</sup> Bhaktivinoda wrote some two hundred such songs that he published in collections—*Kalyāṇa-kalpataru* (1881), *Śaranāgati* (1893), and *Gīta-mālā* (1893). By the mid-nineteenth century Bengali fiction had become popular, especially with the work of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (Sen 1979: 208ff). Bhaktivinoda’s didactic novels would clearly have been an attempt to reach a wide Bengali-reading public already attuned to the genre.

(knowledge of divine relish) based on the BhP and Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛtasindhu*. Bhaktivinoda concludes the story by advising his readers desiring to better comprehend this confidential (*rahasya*) topic to approach an appropriate (*upayukta*) guru for instruction (Chs. 8-10).<sup>23</sup>

### III.1.2. *Varnāśrama: Social Stability and Upward Spiritual Mobility*

In the course of its doctrinal and political vicissitudes through the nineteenth century the Brahmo Samaj was arguably the most vocal and influential body of Hindu conciliation with modern Western critique of traditionalism in Bengal. Therefore, as we have seen, Bhaktivinoda addressed its members and sympathisers and responded to their concerns. Cast in the language and spirit of reform, his efforts actually emphasized renewal. His initial aim was to win respect for the BhP and its “truest interpreter,” Śrī Caitanya.<sup>24</sup> Later he introduced in more detail the teachings of Caitanya and his followers, especially Rūpa Gosvāmī. The key to the proper implementation of those precepts, he argued, is conscientious practice (*sādhana*) which Naren and Anand Bābus begin to adopt in *Prema-pradīpa*; and the key to such implementation, we learn at the end of that book, is the very traditional practice of accepting guidance from an appropriate master or guru. Such a guru, according to Bhaktivinoda, must be a *suddha-bhakta* (pure devotee) accomplished in the spirit and practice of *śaraṇāgati*, or self-surrender to Kṛṣṇa, having demonstrated by personal example the proper observance of *varṇa* and *āśrama* rules.

I will now discuss *varṇāśrama* as developed by Bhaktivinoda in his Bengali prose work *Jaiva-dharma* (Religion of the Soul), his 1893 magnum opus. Like the *Prema-pradīpa*, *Jaiva-dharma* is a didactic “novel,” but is much longer, and the setting is an earlier period—the sixteenth century. We can then view his presentation of *śaraṇāgati* (based on his *Śaraṇāgati* song collection) and consider how he relates these themes in the pursuit of a universalist Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. These two idea-constellations in combination build Bhaktivinoda's essential answer to the two inter-

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<sup>23</sup> Exemplary behaviour of Vaiṣṇavas is a running theme also throughout Bhaktivinoda's *Jaiva-dharma*. One noteworthy example in this context regarding appropriate dealings between men and women occurs at the end of chapter three, when Lāharī Mahāśaya leaves the company of Mādhava dāsa, whose reputation was blemished by the return of his wife after he had formally adopted the ascetic life of a *bābājī* (2001: 55-57).

<sup>24</sup> Note that Bhaktivinoda, in early writings at least, makes a major concession to modernity by admitting the fallibility of scripture. Whether he retained this attitude in later writings deserves further study. Cf. Yāmunācārya's defense of Pañcarātra (chapter one of this thesis) that stresses the infallibility of Pañcarātra due to its being spoken by the infallible Lord.

related overarching Western challenges to traditional Hinduism, caste and idolatry. They also serve to cure what in his view is the root cause of all spiritual misconceptions, namely “*māyāvāda*,” illusionism, associated with Advaita Vedānta. In response to the caste and idolatry issues, Bhaktivinoda offers a universalist Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism much in the spirit of his times while upholding, as he understood it, the Caitanya tradition of BhP interpretation. According to that tradition, in proper relation to each other *varṇāśrama* and *śaraṇāgati* serve to foster individual and collective spiritual progress. *Varṇāśrama* social structure facilitates fulfillment of social obligations by maintaining a stable order supportive of individuals’ spiritual progress. It is, Bhaktivinoda suggests, the root of regulated life (*vaidha-jīvanera mūla*) (Bhaktivinoda 1989: 36). In contrast, *śaraṇāgati* emphasizes the individual’s ultimate obligation to surrender to divine will and is the process or modality for doing so. I would suggest that it roughly corresponds to the category of *rāga* in the context of the *vidhi/rāga* mapping of practice modalities. For Bhaktivinoda, both *varṇāśrama* and *śaraṇāgati* in combination point to advance of *adhikāra* (competence) in serving that divine will; the substance of such *adhikāra* is *śuddha-bhakti*.

Universalism informs Bhaktivinoda’s approach to *varṇāśrama*, relying largely on his interpretation of the terms *nitya-karma*, *nitya-dharma*, *naimittika-karma* and *naimittika-dharma* in his book *Jaiva-dharma*. Traditionally (in purāṇic and Dharmasāstric texts) *nitya-karma* and *naimittika-karma* refer respectively to daily and occasional ritual duties performed by pious members of the “twice-born” *varṇas*. While acknowledging these standard meanings, Bhaktivinoda proposes that such usage is *vyavahārika* (conventional) and should not obscure the *paramārthika* (transcendental) aim of sacred texts.<sup>25</sup> Taken in its *paramārthika* and indeed literal sense, *nitya-karma*—“continual or perpetual action”—denotes transcendental, eternal occupation in *bhakti*. From this perspective the expression *naimittika-karma*, “circumstantial action,” denotes activities or duties that are incidental to, not integral to, eternal occupation (Bhaktivinoda 1989: 36).

As for *nitya-* and *naimittika-dharma*,

Considering the essential nature of things (*vastu vicāra karile*), the *nitya-dharma* of the *jīvas* is pure spiritual practice (*śuddha-cid-anuśīlanai kevala*

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<sup>25</sup> Note the adoption of Advaita Vedāntic terminology (*vyavahārika* and *paramārthika*), recast for use in explicating an understanding of how a follower of Caitanya relates to the world.

*jīvera nitya-dharma haya*), and all other types of *dharma* are *naimittika*. (ibid. 37)

Bhaktivinoda then lists *varṇāśrama-dharma*, *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, *sāṅkhya-jñāna*, and *tapasyā* as examples of *naimittika-dharma*, all having in common that their practice is only of value to bound *jīvas* for becoming free from the circumstantial cause (*nimitta*) of being bewildered by *māyā*.

Having established these definitions, Bhaktivinoda can recalibrate the traditional *varṇāśrama* social ranking in terms of devotional qualification:

The purport (*tātparya*) is that one born as a *caṇḍāla*, when purified by the *saṃskāra* (impressions) of *sādhu-saṅga* and engaged in the *jīva's nitya-dharma* of pure spiritual cultivation, is superior (*śreṣṭha*) to a brahmin who practices *naimittika-dharma* but abstains from the *nitya-dharma* of pure spiritual practice. (ibid. 37)

Hence spiritual qualification surpasses or transcends social rank as determined by birth, and spiritual qualification, based on “faith rooted in the Absolute Truth” (*tāttvika-śraddhā*), is open to anyone able to gain the benefit of association with spiritually elevated persons.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the liberalism such statements as those above show (based on prooftexts from BhP or similar texts), a good share of social conservatism is evident in our author’s writings.<sup>27</sup> According to Bhaktivinoda, it would be mistaken to conclude from this spiritual-over-material qualification calculus that one born an outcaste could, with spiritual qualification, take up a position and occupation within the *varṇa* system. Granted, the BhP (3.33.7) celebrates the purifying power of the holy name with a well-known statement that a “dogeater” on whose tongue the Lord’s name is chanted has “already undergone austerities, performed fire sacrifices, bathed at the holy places, followed the rules of proper conduct, and thoroughly studied the

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<sup>26</sup> Later Bhaktivinoda speaks of *grhasṭha-bhaktas*—practitioners of *vaiṣṇava-dharma* who are outside the *varṇāśrama* system (Bhaktivinoda 2001: 172). One might well wonder what is meant by being a “*grhasṭha*” but outside *varṇāśrama*, where *āśrama* indicates the four stages of life (*brahmacārya*—student; *grhasṭha/grhasṭhī*—householder; *vanaprastha*—“forest dweller”/retired; and *sannyāsa*—renounced). But see O’Connell (1982: 189ff) on the Bengal subcaste (*jāti*) of “*Jāti-Vaiṣṇavas*,” a designation referring specifically to Vaiṣṇava householders belonging neither to the brahmanically ordered system of caste and stage of life (to which some *grhasṭha* Vaiṣṇavas do belong) nor to the group of Vaiṣṇava ascetics (*Bairāgis*) who eschew domestic and social affairs.

<sup>27</sup> The joining of spiritual liberalism with social conservatism is typical of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* traditions in India. Francis Clooney discusses this in his essay “Fierce Words: Repositioning of Caste and Devotion in Traditional Vaiṣṇava Hindu Ethics,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 399-419.

Vedas.” Yet a Vaiṣṇava should not, on the strength of such statements, violate social customs (*loka-vyavahāra-viruddha karma*) (Bhaktivinoda 1989: 85). Nor should Vaiṣṇava householders born within the *varṇa* system marry outside their own *varṇas*. Yet the governing principle here is *not* social custom, but rather the acceptance of what is favourable to *bhakti*.

Although the rules of the four-*varṇa* system are *naimittika* in nature, they are still favorable for the maintenance of worldly life. One cannot become a Vaiṣṇava simply by giving up the conventional customs of the four *varṇas*. Vaiṣṇavas should do whatever is favorable for *bhakti*, and one can only be indifferent to *varṇa* duties when one has become qualified by genuine detachment. Then one can reject the duties of the four *varṇas* and everything associated with them. (ibid., 99)

*Naimittika-dharma* is not superfluous because it provides a religious framework for action in the world while one progresses in *bhakti*, and it regulates persons who are spiritually unconscious (*anudita viveka puruṣa*). In both cases it fosters elevation, especially by bringing one into association with *śuddha-bhaktas*. But *naimittika-dharma* should not become a goal in itself:

*Naimittika-dharma* is esteemed (*ādrta*) because it aims at the truth (*sad-uddēśaka*), but it is tainted by contemptible effects. (ibid., 39)

The undesirable results of *naimittika-dharma* are *bhukti* (worldly enjoyment) and *mukti*, the very rewards a person striving for *nitya-dharma* should shun because they perpetuate spiritual unconsciousness, and because they undermine one’s participation in *paramārthika*, and hence universally valid, spiritual pursuits.

Bhaktivinoda’s analysis of *karma* and *dharma* in terms of ordinary and superior (or extraordinary) perspectives affirmed both the need and the possibility for social order and spiritual practice to be largely in harmony. Yet he also lauds renunciation, as the animating force behind advanced spiritual practice, yielding increased indifference by the adept to the structures and expectations of society. Such indifference would not, in his view, provide license for antinomian behaviour. His writings on *varṇāśrama* therefore show a twofold concern—to revamp the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava community’s reputation in the eyes of his educated contemporaries, and to set right within the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava (both more and less educated) community the understanding about what is authentic practice of Caitanya’s and his followers’ teachings.

Two further observations can be made before moving on to Bhaktivinoda's *Śaraṇāgati* songs. First, recalling Rappaport's hierarchical dimension of liturgical order, by defining *nitya-karma* as "eternal occupation in *bhakti*," he removes "occupation" from the sphere of "specific rules" (the rules for daily brahmanical ritual practice), lifting it to the level of the "cosmological axiom" (that devotional activity prevails in the cosmic economy). By so doing, he accomplishes a reversal of value in terms of an ordinary/extraordinary action spectrum. The traditionally ordinary, routine activities of the brahmin now give way to the extraordinary, devotional activities of anyone so engaged. Yet the double meaning of *nitya* (eternal, and regular or daily) is preserved, indicating the aim to make ordinary, routine life and the life of devotion coextensive.

Second, Bhaktivinoda's discussion of *dharma* partakes of a broad universalizing tradition, echoing both earlier Vaiṣṇava writing and modern revisionist Hindu reflections on a two-fold sense of the word (Halbfass 1988: 334-38; Minor 1997: 386-400).<sup>28</sup> Still, by offering his *nitya-* and *naimittika-dharma* typology, Bhaktivinoda placed the latter in clear subordination to the former, giving considerable impetus for later Caitanya Vaiṣṇava missionising beyond India among persons of non-Indian background (i.e. persons altogether outside the *varṇa* system). *Dharma* thus gains a multiple task with reference to tradition, representing *maintenance* of social stratification, *renewal* of the devotional trajectory of individual practice, and *reform* through universalisation. And with all this comes a greater emphasis on the individual as locus of spiritual practice, a prominent theme in the march of modernity.

### III.1.3. "The Way of Surrender": *Śaraṇāgati* as the Antidote to all Deviations

Bhaktivinoda was an active itinerant village preacher for a two-year period toward the end of his working career.<sup>29</sup> According to one estimate he established over

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<sup>28</sup> Halbfass discusses at length (chapter 18, *passim*) modern Hindu reinterpretations of *dharma* as largely a combination of two clusters of meaning, one emphasizing the essence of a thing, the other referring to obligation. Already in his *Bhagavad-gītā* 18.66 commentary, Halbfass notes, Rāmānuja "assigns the concept of *dharma/svadharmā* a soteriological function" related to the three "methods of liberation" (*jñāna-*, *karma-* and *bhakti-yoga*). Similarly Bhaktivinoda's contemporary Bankim Chandra Chatterji brought essence and norm together in his understanding of *dharma*, referring to the BhP's notion of *bhakti* as *paramo dharma*, the "highest *dharma*."

<sup>29</sup> After promotion to third grade of deputy magistrate, Bhaktivinoda received a two year leave of absence from 1891-93 during which he took up itinerant preaching and organizing

five hundred “*nāma-haṭṭa*” *saṅghas* (associations of “holy name markets”) throughout Bengal (Dasa, S. N. 1996: 109-115) as his method of reviving Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism among the masses in the early 1890’s. During this time he wrote and published most of his Bengali devotional songs, including the *Śaraṇāgati* collection. Bhaktivinoda’s presentation of *śaraṇāgati* in this book recalls the Pañcarātric notion of self-surrender mentioned briefly in chapter one. What is outlined in the *Ahīrbudhnyasamhitā* and *Lakṣmī-tantra* and considerably elaborated in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition serves as a template for Bhaktivinoda in his efforts to frame what he sees as authentic Caitanya Vaiṣṇava doctrine and practice over against the several forms of inauthentic religiosity of his time. As mentioned in chapter one (1.2.3.3) *śaraṇāgati* (or *śaraṇāpatti*, as it is called in HBV) has six aspects of practice and attitude. Combined, they aim at exclusive attention to the object of devotion and complete orientation of one’s life to that object. In the *Lakṣmī-tantra* version of the text, Lord Nārāyaṇa responds to Śrī’s (Lakṣmī’s) plea for instruction:

The resolution to perform only such acts as conform (to my desires); the abandonment of all acts that displease me; the firm conviction that (I) will protect him who chooses me as his (sole) protector; self-surrender and humility; these are the six components of (the middle course<sup>30</sup> called) *śaraṇāgati*. (Gupta 2000: 93)

Bhaktivinoda divided his *Śaraṇāgati* songbook (1893) into sections corresponding to these six elements of devotion (in reverse order from the above verse) and elaborated on each element in several songs cast in autobiographical, confessional style suggesting progress from worldly depravity to exalted devotion.<sup>31</sup> The reader (or singer) is progressively led from this-worldly concerns (pursued within the *varṇāśrama* social framework) transformed into responsibility accepted on behalf of the Lord, eventually to the point of devotional rapture highlighted in the final song.

Although Bhaktivinoda’s readership for these songs would have been Bengali village folk rather than *bhadralok*, he clearly wanted to protect his audience from several potential contemporary influences, especially non-theistic Vedāntic notions

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of village Vaiṣṇava associations under the rubric *nāma-haṭṭa*, the “market-place of the (holy) name.”

<sup>30</sup> *Śaraṇāgati* is referred to in *Lakṣmī-tantra* as the “middle course” between prescribed and prohibited deeds, centred on reliance on the Lord.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Prentiss (1999: 50), on the *nāyanmār* poets: “[T]he range of their emotions encourages identification with them as imperfect people, bound by the limits of the human condition. They are embodied and thus are ordinary human beings working against numerous limitations in order to reach God.”

centred in *māyāvāda*. Among four songs in *Śaraṇāgati*'s section on *Pratikula-varjana*, "Rejection of that which runs counter (to spiritual progress)," our author singles out the "*māyāvādī*," the impersonal Advaita Vedāntist, as the object of his greatest scorn:

The heart which is penetrated by the fault of *māyāvāda* becomes hard as a thunderbolt by degraded sophistry. The *māyāvādī* declares that the true form of *bhakti*, its object (Śrī Kṛṣṇa), and its possessor (the devotee) are all transitory (and thus illusory). Fie on his pretense of service to Kṛṣṇa! Fie on his pretense of hearing and chanting Kṛṣṇa's glories! His prayers strike Kṛṣṇa's body with blows like thunderbolts. There is nothing as contrary to *bhakti* as *māyāvāda*. Therefore I do not desire the association of the *māyāvādī*. (Daśarātha-suta dāsa 1994: 41-42)<sup>32</sup>

Distaste for *māyāvāda* and Advaita Vedānta has a long history among Vaiṣṇavas, but for Bhaktivinoda its contemporary increase in popularity, traceable at least partially to the influx of European notions of divine formlessness, was cause to lament.<sup>33</sup> To pause briefly from our discussion of *Śaraṇāgati*, in an English book review, intended as a summary of a Sanskrit work *Nitya-rūpa-samsthāpanam* (Establishing Eternal Form) by a certain Pandit Upendra Mohan Goswami Nyayaratna, "a well-known descendent of Prabhu Nityānanda,"<sup>34</sup> Bhaktivinoda wrote in 1883:

The current of the abstruse idea of a formless Brahma, which has invaded thought and worship in India since the time of Pandit Sankaracarya has, with the existence of the European idea of a formless God, become so much extended, especially in the minds of the youngsters of the country, that if an attempt is made to establish the fact that God has an external form, it is hooted down as an act of stupidity. We are exceedingly glad to see that Pandit Upendra Mohan Goswami has had the courage to advance his arguments in opposition to the current belief of the prejudiced people. (Daśarātha-suta dāsa: n.d.)

It might well have been Rammohan Roy doing the "hooting down," judging from his several statements of that nature. One example of this genre comes from a tract of 1820 attributed to Roy that was later published as "Dialogue Between a Theist and Idolater." The tract opens with this challenge:

I would ask those Pundits, together with their followers, who are averse to the worship of the supreme God, and devoted to the service of images: Why do you make yourselves the laughing-stock of all sensible men, by consider-

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<sup>32</sup> My translation, based on Daśarātha-suta dāsa's.

<sup>33</sup> See Clarke, ch. four, on India and ideas drawn from it by the Romantics. Quite possibly the "European notions" lamented by Bhaktivinoda had their origins in India.

<sup>34</sup> Nityānanda was a close associate of Caitanya, celebrated in CC as Balarāma in Kṛṣṇa *līlā*.

ing miserable images which are devoid of sense, motion and the power of speech, as the omniscient, omnipresent and almighty God? (Hay: 53)

Thus Bhaktivinoda saw condemnations of idolatry coming from Hindu revisionist circles as indicative of a mindset prone to illusionism stemming from the Advaita Vedānta of the eighth-century philosopher Śaṅkara.<sup>35</sup> Typically, reinterpreted Advaita Vedānta would prove central to key exponents of revisionist Hinduism, from which Caitanya Vaiṣṇava theologians have in the past and continue today to strictly distance themselves. As we saw in chapter one, *bhakti* (inclusive of temple worship practices as prescribed in Pañcarātra texts) as conceived by Śrīvaiṣṇava writers, took on central importance in contrast to the same notion in Advaita Vedānta, where it served as a mere support for the development of knowledge of the Self. Therefore, as we shall see in the next section, one task Bhaktivinoda set for himself, along with countering *māyāvāda* arguments on the nature of ultimate truth, was to defend image worship as an appropriate, perfectly respectable, devotional practice—as a legitimate form of truth as cultivation.

The final section of *Śaraṇāgati*, *Bhakti-anukūla-mātra kāryera svīkāra*, “The exclusive acceptance of what is favourable for devotion,” is the most extensive, with four subsections after an initial four songs. The subsections include thirteen songs on “Longing for divine service” (*bhajana-lālasā*); three songs on “Longing for (spiritual) perfection” (*siddhī-lālasā*); one song on *vijñapti* (“Request”); and one song on “The glories of the (divine) name” (*śrī-nāma-māhātmya*). Just as the song collection as a whole progresses toward spiritual perfection, the *Bhakti-anukūla* section moves from an emphasis on *vaidhī-bhakti-sādhana* to an emphasis on *rāga-bhakti-sādhana*. Before proceeding to Bhaktivinoda’s defense of image worship, we should be reminded that he sees it mainly as one aspect of *vaidhī-bhakti-sādhana*—rule-governed practice integral to realising the goal of *śaraṇāgati*. This said, we should also notice the devotional flavour of the following song, clearly putting the sense of external compulsion characteristic of *vidhi* in the background. This third of four *bhakti-anukūla* songs illustrates the desired sense of eagerness in such practice, of which image worship is an integral part.

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<sup>35</sup> However, see De (1962: 516-17 & fn. 1 p. 517) on indications that Roy’s attitude toward image worship was somewhat nuanced, and that “it is doubtful if he accept[ed] all the implications of Śaṅkara’s extreme idealistic monism.”

. . . [My] mind ever longs for the opportunity to hear the music of the *mṛdaṅga*.<sup>36</sup> Upon hearing the (kind of) *kīrtana* ordained by Gaura [Caitanya], my heart dances in ecstasy. Beholding the images [*mūrti*] of the Divine Couple (Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa), I feel the greatest joy. By honoring [the Lord's] *prasāda* (*prasāda-sevā*), I conquer over all worldly illusions. Goloka [Vrindavan] appears in my home whenever I see the worship and service [of Lord Hari] taking place there. When I see the Ganges, that river of nectar emanating from the feet [of the Lord], my happiness reaches no limit. The sight of the [holy] *tulasī* tree soothes my soul, for I know she gives pleasure to Mādhava [Kṛṣṇa]. By honoring *śāk*,<sup>37</sup> a favorite of Caitanya's, I consider life worthwhile. . . (Daśaratha-suta dāsa 1994: 46-47, vv. 4-7)

Here Bhaktivinoda lauds an aggregate of items and activities centred on the service and praise of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as spiritually uplifting and transformative for one possessed of a devotional attitude. The picture conveyed is one of enchantment afforded by simple but devotional perceptions and practices, and the emphasis is on the promise of uplifting devotional *experience* through such ordinary practice, an experience of joyfulness indicative of *bhakti* as both way (*sādhana*) and goal (*sādhya*) of spiritual aspiration.

Bhaktivinoda graphically portrayed the transformative aim of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* in the final song of *Śaraṇāgati*, *Śrī-nāma-māhātmya*, "The glories of the (divine) name." I will cite this song *in extenso* both because it shows the high regard Bhaktivinoda held for the divine names of Kṛṣṇa as the essential means of pursuing *śaraṇāgati* and attaining spiritual perfection and because it graphically summarises what he counted as the perfectional experience attained by adopting the process of *śaraṇāgati*. Chanting the divine names is, he tells us, profoundly transformative, implying that it is incomparably beyond any experience *māyāvādīs* might gain by their "pretense of service to Kṛṣṇa":

(1) What power does the name of Kṛṣṇa possess? My heart constantly burns [in the fire of worldly desires], like a desert scorched by rays of the sun. The holy name, entering the core of my heart through the holes of my ears, showers unparalleled nectar upon my soul.

(2) [The holy name] speaks from within my heart, moves onto the tip of my tongue, and constantly dances on it in the form of transcendental sound. My throat becomes choked up, my body shivers again and again, and my feet cannot remain still.

(3) Rivers of tears flow from my eyes. Perspiration completely soaks my body, all my skin thrills with rapture, my hairs stand on end, and my complexion turns pale and discolored. My mind grows faint, I begin to experi-

<sup>36</sup> *Mṛdaṅga* is a two-headed clay drum traditionally used to accompany devotional singing.

<sup>37</sup> *Śāk* is a cooked food preparation made with any green, leafy vegetable; spinach.

ence devastation, and my entire body is shattered in a flood of ecstatic emotions.

(4) While causing such an ecstatic disturbance, the holy name showers liquid nectar on my heart and drowns me in the ocean of divine love [of Godhead]. He does not allow me to understand anything, for He has made me truly mad and has stolen away my heart and all my resources.

(5) Such is the behavior of Him in whom I have taken shelter. I am not capable of describing all this. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is independent and thus acts on His own sweet will. In whatever way He becomes happy, that is also my way of happiness.

(6) The holy name is the bud of the flower of divine love, and is the very abode of astonishing mellows (*adbhuta rasera dhāma*). Such is the power He manifests that when His holy name starts to blossom a little further, it then reveals His own divine form and qualities. Thus my heart is abducted and taken directly to Kṛṣṇa.

(7) Blossoming fully, [the flower of the holy name] takes me to Vraja and reveals to me His own love dalliance. [This name] gives to me my own eternal spiritual body, keeps me right by Kṛṣṇa's side, and completely destroys everything related to this mortal frame of mine.

(8) The name of Kṛṣṇa is a transcendental touchstone, a mine of all devotional mellows. It is eternally liberated, and the embodiment of pure *rasa*. When all impediments to the pure chanting of the holy name are taken away and destroyed, then my happiness will know its true awakening. (Ibid., 68-69)<sup>38</sup>

For Bhaktivinoda, submission to the Lord (*śaraṇāgati*) means above all resorting to his divine names. In answer to the initial question “What power does the name of Kṛṣṇa possess?” the author portrays his own experience of that power.<sup>39</sup> Not only is his mind led to fainting and his “entire body is shattered in a flood of ecstatic emotions (verse 3),” but it “reveals [the Lord's] own divine form and qualities” and “[the author's] heart is abducted and taken directly to Kṛṣṇa” (verse 6). By the power of the divine name the author experiences his mortal body as destroyed—replaced, in effect, with a *siddha-deha* (perfected body) fit for keeping immediate proximity to Kṛṣṇa in the *līlā* of his divine realm. This divine name, as *śuddha-rasamaya*, the “embodiment of pure *rasa*,” affects transformation of the individual so profoundly that it seems to render inconsequential all worldly matters such as would be regulated by *varṇāśrama*.

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<sup>38</sup> I have inserted square brackets within this and the previous translation by Daśaratha-suta dāsa to indicate words and phrases implied but not explicitly in the Bengali text.

<sup>39</sup> It is worth noting that this songbook was completed just before Bhaktivinoda retired from government service (Dasa, S. N.: 110-11). Whether the intense experience described is actual personal experience or expression of aspiration, in any case Bhaktivinoda offers himself as example of a *gṛhastha* able to carry on a government job, maintain a family, and cultivate exalted spiritual emotions.

In response to the caste issue, then, Bhaktivinoda subordinated caste considerations to the practice of *bhakti*, performable by anyone regardless of caste. Practice of *bhakti* requires conscious choices of what should be avoided and what accepted in conformity to divine will, a will that presumably does not generally interfere with the social status quo. Most firmly to be avoided are persons holding to an “ultimate sacred postulate” (recalling Rappaport’s term) of ultimate non-differentiation represented by *māyāvāda* doctrine typically adopted by modern subscribers to Advaita Vedānta. And most eagerly to be adopted are the several practices of *bhakti*, including *mūrti-sevā* and *harināma*, culminating in an experiential transformation of the sort described in this last song of *Śaranāgati*.

We can now look at Bhaktivinoda’s response to the second major critique of traditional Hindu religious practice, namely “idolatry.” This charge was, of course, made against Indians performing temple worship long before the British arrived in India, by the several waves of invading and ruling Muslims over several centuries. But it was nineteenth-century Christian (especially Protestant Christian) criticism that yielded the sort of capitulatory response we saw from Rammohan Roy, which would in turn yield resistance from more traditional Hindus.

#### III.1.4. The Universality of Śrī Mūrti: Image Worship Beyond Idolatry

Bhaktivinoda’s most extensive discussion on Vaiṣṇava image worship and response to the charge of idolatry is found in *Jaiva-dharma*. In chapter eleven, “*Nitya-dharma o butparasta arthāt pautalikatā*” (*Nitya-dharma* and Idolatry), a group of respectable Muslim scholars present themselves before an assembly of Vaiṣṇava pandits to submit their misgivings about the latter’s worship practices.<sup>40</sup> Through the fictional Vaiṣṇava pandit Gorācānda, Bhaktivinoda responds to a fictional mullahs’ challenges with a pāñcarātric explanation of the Lord’s attributes coupled with an explanation of graded qualifications of worshippers (*adhikāra-bheda*). We can now look at Bhaktivinoda’s response and relate it to Rappaport’s five features of the divine.

The essential argument is this: Among God’s six principal attributes, one is *acintya-śakti*, inconceivable power, by which he can reveal his other attributes to

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<sup>40</sup> The discussion proceeds amicably and ends with the mullahs politely excusing themselves. Bhaktivinoda concludes, “It was not evident what conclusion the Mullah Sāhib reached as a result of this discussion” (Bhaktivinoda 2001: 273).

bound souls, including his attribute of *saundarya*, or beauty.<sup>41</sup> But he becomes perceivable especially to extraordinarily qualified souls (*mahājanas*) who in turn reveal him as the *mūrti* to the world. The following account of this process might be compared with the narrative account of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's realisation of Rādhāramaṇa in the previous chapter:

The form of *bhagavān* is revealed to the *mahājanas* through their trance of unalloyed (*viśuddha*) *jñāna-yoga*; they meditate on that transcendental form (*parameśvarera mūrti*) in their hearts, which are purified by *bhakti*. When the *bhakta's* heart is extended forth (*prasārita*) to the world after continuous meditation, Śrī Hari's transcendental form is reflected from the *bhakta's* heart to the world, and when the divine form of the Lord is reflected (*cit-svarūpera pratiphalana*) in this way by the *mahājanas*, it becomes inscribed (*ankita haya*) (as a visible image).<sup>42</sup> (Bhaktivinoda 2001: 267; Bhaktivinoda 1989: 198)

In other words, the claim is that an adept, through his or her extraordinary perception, can directly perceive the divinity's form; the adept can then act as a reflective presence by whose passive agency the divinity becomes visible and worshipable to ordinary persons.

According to Bhaktivinoda, if one agrees that *bhagavān* has the power to reveal himself in the world and that human beings have varied powers to perceive him, one can then appreciate the benefit of *mūrti-pūjā* for all of human society as part of the *sādhana* process of spiritual upliftment. Even if unenlightened persons have an incomplete understanding of the relationship between matter and spirit, this is no cause to condemn such persons' worship practices as sinful. Nor, indeed, is it even so much an issue of proper versus improper representation of the divinity:

*Īśvara* [God] is one without a second (*advitīya*), and He has no rival. Everything in this world is created by Him and is under His control. Therefore, He can be satisfied with any object when it is used in His worship. There is no object in this world one can worship that can arouse His malice, for He is all-

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<sup>41</sup> Echoing Pāñcarātric six-fold divine attribution, Bhaktivinoda's list of six attributes includes *aiśvarya* (opulence), *sarva-śaktimattā* (omnipotence), *mangalamaya* (all-auspiciousness), *saundarya* (beauty), *aśeṣa-jñāna* (omniscience), and *nirlepa/svatantra* (detachment and independence).

<sup>42</sup> Note that "*jñāna-yoga*" is here given as the means of perceiving divinity, presumably used here not in the classical sense of meditation on the *nirguṇa* Atman/Brahman identity, but as a meditational mode of *bhakti* akin to Madhva's notion of the close connection between *jñāna* and *bhakti* (Majumdar 1979: 7, citing B. N. K. Sharma, *Madhva's Teachings in His Own Words* [Book University Edition, 1961] p. 91). The term *ankita* can mean simply drawn or outlined. "Inscription" lends perhaps a broader meaning, like "rendering," but suggests a relationship to writing, where both share in a process of objectification (Kaviraj: 74).

auspicious. . . [I]t is not an offense to worship the Lord in material elements (*bhautika viṣaye īṣvare upāsanā*). [Rather, it is] most essential (*nitānta prayojana haya*) for those of low spiritual eligibility, and it is particularly auspicious (*viśeṣa maṅgala haya*) for people of high spiritual eligibility. It is mere opinion (*matavāda mātra*) to think that the worship of the *mūrti* is not good. There is no logic or evidence from *śāstra* to support this position. (Bhaktivinoda 2001: 271; idem. 1989: 200-201)

The least qualified person (*nimna adhikārī*) will initially perceive the essentially and ultimately pure and spiritual image (*cinmaya-vigraha*) as *jaḍamaya-vigraha*, an image consisting of matter. One further advanced (*madhyama adhikārī*) will see the same image as *manomaya-vigraha*, a form made substantial in the mind.<sup>43</sup> Both have opportunity, through proper *sādhana*, to become fully qualified (*ūcca adhikārī*) to always perceive the image as fully spiritual.

Bhaktivinoda insists throughout his argumentation that the form of God is transcendental (*parameśvara mūrti*), confirming Rappaport's first feature of the divine, that for its worshippers it is "not material in any ordinary sense." Nor is the image an abstraction, but rather, as *mūrti*, perceivable image, it "has being" (the second feature of the divine). Possessing *acintya-śakti*, inconceivable power, the divine image, as much as the Lord, is powerful or efficacious, able to cause effects (divinity's third feature) and hence "is something like alive" (divinity's fourth feature), being "all-auspicious." Again, all this is "rationally incomprehensible" (the fifth feature of the divine), being *acintya* or inconceivable.

For Bhaktivinoda, rational incomprehensibility did not undermine the veracity of claims about the *mūrti*'s divinity; rather, graded qualification of *bhaktas* accounted for levels of appreciation thereof. His threefold categorisation of qualification to perceive the divine image is an instance of the classical Indian notion of "diversity of qualification" (*adhikāra-bheda*), the grading of human beings in terms of spiritual qualifications generally and, more narrowly here, of persons performing devotional practices.<sup>44</sup> Whether narrowly or broadly conceived, for Bhaktivinoda the essential

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<sup>43</sup> The Mathura English translation inserts, as commentary to the term *manomaya*, "This means that the intermediate devotee has faith that the Deity is conscious of his thoughts and prayers, and accepts his mood of worship. However, the intermediate devotee, unlike the advanced devotee, does not directly perceive the Deity as the spiritual all-conscious form of Śrī Hari" (267).

<sup>44</sup> See *Jaiva-dharma*, Mathura ed. 44: "There are countless individual *jīvas*, and they have innumerable varieties of *adhikāra*, which have been divided into three broad categories according to their primary characteristics: *karma-adhikāra* (eligibility for pious action leading to material gain), *jñāna-adhikāra* (eligibility for knowledge leading to liberation), and *prema-*

issue in the present context was the same as with spiritual qualification generally, namely *mobility* from lower to higher qualification. That upper spiritual mobility is possible within this lifetime (without challenge to the social status quo) was for Bhaktivinoda a given, and hence whatever fosters higher spiritual qualification, including *mūrti-sevā*, was to be embraced, and whatever inhibits such progress was to be rejected. We saw that this was a guiding principle for Bhaktivinoda’s approach to the issue of caste and how social convention relates to devotional practice. For Bhaktivinoda it would also, as we shall see shortly, justify reappropriation of the pejorative term “idolatry” to classify practices and attitudes he counts as inhibitive or destructive of spiritual progress.

To Bhaktivinoda’s argument the mullah voices further objection:

The inclination toward God cannot be stimulated by worship of the image [*śrī-mūrti-pūjā*], because the mind of one who performs such worship always remains confined to the properties of matter.

To this our author replies:

We can understand the defect in your theory by studying the ancient historical accounts (*pūrve pūrve itihāsa ālocanā karile*) of those who became great devotees. Many people began to worship the *mūrti* while they were neophytes, but as their devotional mood developed through the company of adepts (*sat-saṅga*), their realization of the transcendental and conscious nature of the *mūrti* also increased, and eventually they became immersed in the ocean of *preman*. (Bhaktivinoda 2001: 270-71; idem. 1989: 201)

Such unspecific “historical evidence” was not likely to sway an educated *bhadralok* audience; rather, *Jaiva-dharma* was Bhaktivinoda’s vernacular catechism of Caitanya doctrine meant for the Bengali Vaiṣṇavas of his time.<sup>45</sup> Once again, Bhaktivinoda argued on the basis of *adhikāra-bheda*, but with emphasis on the hope of progress from lower to higher competence to realize “the transcendental and conscious nature of the *mūrti*,” or Rappaport’s first four features of the divine. Like *Prema-pradīpa*, the book’s overarching message is that *sat-saṅga* (fraternity with spiritual adepts) is essential to gain effective comprehension of that doctrinal complex, for such adepts, as embodiments of the tradition, would awaken the innate af-

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*adhikāra* (eligibility for unalloyed loving service to Bhagavān). See also Halbfass 1991: 53, 66-74, on traditional versus neo-Hindu notions of *adhikāra-bheda*. In various contexts Bhaktivinoda seems to use both senses—the narrower (traditional) and the broader (neo-Hindu). See also B.N.K. Sharma (57), on three levels of *adhikāra* for contemplation of Brahman according to the *Bhāgavata Tantra* (a Pāñcarātrika text cited by Madhva, no longer extant).

<sup>45</sup> *Jaiva-dharma* seems to follow roughly the structure and content of Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*.

finity for service that becomes *bhakti*. *Bhakti*, as the embodiment, bodying forth, or situated practice and experience of that discursive complex of the sacred, unfolds into *preman* (divine love) in the experience of transcendence afforded by interaction with the “divine body” of the *mūrti*.

That Bhaktivinoda linked the hope of progressive spiritual development with faith in “*śrī-mūrti*” is further indicated in another portion of *Jaiva-dharma* in a discussion on Vaiṣṇava etiquette. Even the least qualified Vaiṣṇava, the *prākṛta-bhakta* or *kaniṣṭha-vaiṣṇava*, could expect to progress on the strength of his or her faith in *arcā*, despite an undeveloped service attitude toward other Vaiṣṇavas. Although such faith in *arcā* may be only a “shadow reflection of *bhakti*” (*chāyā-bhakty-ābhāsa*) based typically on family tradition and ritual formalities, it is still a sign of great fortune, indicating that one can progress gradually to a higher stage of devotion (Bhaktivinoda 1989: 132-34).

### III.1.5. From Imagination to Substance and Particularity to Universality

In contrast to the *prākṛta-bhakta* preoccupied with image worship yet on the progressive spiritual path are a variety of “idolaters” who, although seemingly given to religious practices, are deviated. Concerned to distinguish authentic from inauthentic worship, Bhaktivinoda designates as *pauttalikatā* (lit. “puppetry”) five types of worship he counts as inauthentic in his 1886 Bengali prose work *Caitanya-sikṣāmṛta* (The Nectarean Teachings of Caitanya). First of these diversions from progress is the worship of nature’s wonders (*cākacikya-viśiṣṭa īśvara-pūjā*), based on innocent but ignorant faith (*vastu-jñānābhāve jadake īśvara baliyā pūjā kare*). Although he counts this as idolatry, Bhaktivinoda says it is without offense (*nindā nāi*), unlike the second through fifth types of “idolatry,” displaying varying degrees of offense to God.<sup>46</sup> Second is *nirviśeṣa-vādī pauttalikatā*, the idolatry practiced by those for whom ultimate reality is indeterminate, or without form. Third (a subset of the previous, perhaps) is *pañcopāsana*, the provisional worship of five imagined mundane divinities (*īśvarera jaḍīya-rūpa kalpanā kare*—Durgā, Gaṇeśa, Surya, Śiva, and Viṣṇu) with

<sup>46</sup> Bhaktivinoda’s mention of nature worship echoes European anthropological/Indological theorizing on the origins of religion in “natural religion” during his time, such as that of F Max Mueller (Sharpe 1986: 38-39).

the ultimate aim to reach indeterminate reality.<sup>47</sup> Fourth is the *yogin's* meditation on an imagined form (*kalpita mūrti*) of Viṣṇu as a means to yogic perfection; and fifth is the worship of a *jīva*—an ordinary person—as the highest divinity (*jīvake īśvara-jñāna pauttalikatā*). This last, the Ṭhākura told his readers, is the worst offense (*aparādha*) according to Śrī Caitanya, and yet to venerate a person devoted to God, thinking that person as divine in that sense (*jīve īśvara-buddhi-rūpa*) is not idolatry (Bhaktivinoda 1986: 252-55).

Common to all these idolaters is that they fight amongst each other like jealous co-wives (*sāpatnya-bhāva*). “Only idolaters blame idolaters,” whereas genuine devotees of God, who have comprehended the actual form of the Lord, are not inimical to the idolaters. Rather,

they consider that until the *svarūpa* (actual form) of the Lord is known, other than the way of imagination what alternative is there? By pursuing even imaginative worship, by holy association one will come to a proper understanding (*svarūpa-jñāna udaya haibe*).<sup>48</sup> (ibid. 255)

Once again, in *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*, as in *Jaiva-dharma* and numerous songs, Bhaktivinoda stressed holy association as the key to spiritual elevation beyond all false or misconceived conceptions and practices. Occasionally Bhaktivinoda identified such ideal spiritual leaders as *sāgrāhī-vaiṣṇavas*, devotees of the Lord whose ability to “grasp the essence” is the basis of a universalist outlook. It is such persons who have full comprehension of *śrī-mūrti*, a principle of representation partially manifest in all religious traditions. In an English work, *Chaitanya Mahaprabhu – His Life and Precepts*, Bhaktivinoda ventured to identify *śrī-mūrti* as a principle of which the world's religions all partake:<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Bhaktivinoda also proposes an “evolutionary” understanding of worship (*a la Comte?*), wherein one progresses from “materialism (Durgā worship), “elementalism” (Surya worship), “fetishism” (Ganeśa worship), “man worship” (Śaivism), to “God worship” (Vaiṣṇavism). See “The Temple of Jagannath Puri.”

<sup>48</sup> Compare this to a statement by Rammohan Roy: “Lest persons of feeble intellect unable to comprehend God as not subject to the senses and without form, should either pass their life without any religious duties whatsoever or should engage in evil work,—to prevent this they have represented God in the form of a man and other animals and as possessed of all those desires with which we are conversant whereby they may have some regard to the Divine Being. Afterwards by diligent endeavours they become qualified for the true knowledge of God” (Ghose, 1978: 161, quoted in Young 121-22, fn. 130).

<sup>49</sup> Bhaktivinoda originally wrote this as an English introduction to his Sanskrit work *Gaurāṅga-līlā-smaraṇa-maṅgala-stotram* in 1896.

All sorts of worship are based on the principle of Srimurti. Look into the history of religion and you will come to this noble truth. The Semetic [sic] idea of a patriarchal God both in the pre-Christian period of Judaism and post-Christian period of Christianity and Mahamadanism [sic] is nothing but a limited idea of Srimurti. The monarchic idea of a Jove amongst the Greeks [sic] and of an Indra amongst the Aryan Karmakandis [followers of the scriptural division for religious activity] is also a distant view of the same principle. The idea of a force and Jyotirmaya Brahma [brahman consisting of light] of the meditators and a formless energy of the Shaktas is also a very faint view of the Srimurti. (Bhaktivinoda 1981: 46-47)

A few lines later Bhaktivinoda proposed a twofold classification of *śrī-mūrti* worshippers, the “ideal” and the “physical,” of which he counts the former as superior:

Those of the physical school are entitled from their circumstances of life and state of mind to establish temple institutions. Those who are by circumstances and position entitled to worship the Srimurti in mind have, with due deference to the temple institutions a tendency to worship, usually by *śravanam*—[hearing] and *kīrtan* [*kīrtanam*—chanting], and their church is universal and independent of caste and colour. Mahāprabhu [Caitanya] prefers this latter class and shews their worship in His *Shikshastak* [*Śikṣāstakam*—the eight verses attributed to Śrī Caitanya]. (ibid. 47-48).

Although the “physical school” of *śrī-mūrti* worship is perfectly legitimate, the “ideal school” is apparently the one conducive to the universalist outlook that is free from all forms of idolatry or “imaginative worship.”<sup>50</sup> We may note here the marked resonance with Brahma Samaj universalism: those of the “ideal school,” whose “church is universal and independent of caste and colour,” might have felt quite at home in a Brahma Samaj worship gathering.<sup>51</sup>

Important for our discussion is to note Bhaktivinoda’s universalist message, with two facets. First, the *sāragrāhī* or *śuddha-bhakta* is an embodiment of universalism, as one who transcends the limitations of all forms of temporally circumscribed religious conceptions and yet accepts and embraces whatever trace of authentic spiri-

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<sup>50</sup> Still, elsewhere Bhaktivinoda lauded physical image worship as a practice to be retained “until the end of life” for one duly initiated as a Vaiṣṇava. “Only when one has pleased Lord Hari is the soul freed from this material world at the time of death. Therefore, until the end of life, image worship is necessary even for those who have received mantra. Even though one lives in this world without attachment to matter, still there is danger from matter. Therefore image worship is the proper way to deal with matter.” (Bhaktivinoda 1885: “Pañca Saṁskāra,” *Sajjana Toṣaṇī* vol. 2 no. 1. [1990: 48-51])

<sup>51</sup> The 1830 trust deed of the Brahma Samaj states that its place of worship shall be “a place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly sober religious and devout manner for the worship and adoration of the Eternal Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe . . .” (Majumdar 1979: 94).

tuality diverse religious traditions offer. Such a person is, recalling the canon/charisma spectrum, an embodiment of charisma. Second, anyone in the world, regardless of caste, creed, or race, may be elevated to similar lofty consciousness by association with such a charismatic universalist. Yet on that lofty platform, one will not reject the worship of Kṛṣṇa as an image; rather one will see and serve the image of Kṛṣṇa with purified consciousness, free from the sorts of motivations that could render Kṛṣṇa worship into idolatrous practice. Such *śuddha-bhaktas* or *sāragrāhī-vaiṣṇavas* are either *madhyama-* or *uttama-adhikārins* who, as we noted above, can properly perceive the spiritual nature of the Lord and his image. It is also they who know, due to their devotional purity, how to act and interact appropriately within the social structures of hierarchical classifications, *varṇāśrama*.

### III.2. BHAKTISIDDHĀNTA: FURTHER CONTOURS OF RENEWAL AND REFORM

We find similar concerns to those of Bhaktivinoda displayed in the life and writings of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, one of Bhaktivinoda’s sons who took up his father’s mission as itinerant preacher travelling throughout India in the first third of the twentieth century. Next we will look briefly at his contribution to the preparation of Kṛṣṇa’s move West. The confidence in neglected tradition found in Bhaktivinoda found further expression and concretization in Bhaktisiddhānta, as he outspokenly preached, published, and founded Kṛṣṇa temples throughout and beyond Bengal. Also, Bhaktisiddhānta exhibited an arguably greater readiness for reform of Vaiṣṇava practice than that of his father by claiming that women and those born in sūdra or even outcaste families could receive pāñcarātric initiation, earning for themselves both spiritual *and* social elevation to “twice-born” status. More than his father, Bhaktisiddhānta saw to institutional development of monastic/missionary centres (*maṭhas*). In the central shrine of each *maṭha* Bhaktisiddhānta typically installed *mūrtis* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya and prescribed a regulated program of temple worship for the inmates (celibate *brahmacārins* and *sannyāsins*, no householders).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See Rūpa Vilāsa Dāsa (157-161) for a summary of Bhaktisiddhānta’s preaching activities, including establishment of sixty-four *maṭhas*, establishing of presses, books and journals written or edited, “theistic exhibitions” staged (using diaramas and other exhibits), *parikramas* (circumambulations of holy places) established, and the employment of various non-traditional ways of doing things.

Unlike his father, Bhaktisiddhānta never married, and at the age of forty-four he adopted the formal *dasnāmi sannyāsa* order to facilitate travelling and preaching.<sup>53</sup> Whereas Bhaktivinoda had found time amidst government and family duties (including the raising of fourteen children!) for prolific writing, Bhaktisiddhānta concentrated initially on intense personal *sādhana* and later on propagating his organised mission, the Gauḍīya Maṭh, throughout India. Still, he also wrote and published extensively—including articles for his father’s journal *Sajjana-toṣanī* and later (in English) for his own journal, *The Harmonist*; Bengali commentaries to Vṛndāvanadāsa’s *Caitanya-bhāgavata* and Kṛṣṇadāsa’s *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and a *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* edition with several commentaries, including one by his father (Rūpa Vilāsa Dāsa: 163-72).<sup>54</sup>

As with his father, a persistent theme in Bhaktisiddhānta’s writings is the rejection of inauthentic and pursuit of authentic religion, especially by counteracting *smārta*-brahmanism and Vaiṣṇava-casteism.<sup>55</sup> Like other Hindu reformers he viewed “*smārta*-brahmins” as professional ritualists, icons of religious degeneration caused by worldly motivation.<sup>56</sup> But he also attacked the institutions of “*vaiṣṇava-santāna*” (family descent from spiritually exalted Vaiṣṇavas) for similar reasons. At stake for Bhaktisiddhānta was ecclesiastical authority, and his adversaries were persons claim-

<sup>53</sup> Owing to its being considered a departure from Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition this action has contributed to the controversial character of Bhaktisiddhānta’s mission in the eyes of other branches of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. See O’Connell (1999: 232) for a brief summary of “marked departures from the traditional Chaitanya Vaishnava modes of institutionalizing” represented by the Gauḍīya Maṭh, its successor *maṭhas*, and ISKCON. See also this chapter, fn. 65.

<sup>54</sup> In 1913 Bhaktisiddhānta established his first press in Calcutta, referring to it as the *bṛhad mṛdāṅga*, the “great drum,” i.e. the instrument able to broadcast the *sankīrtana* message (traditionally accompanied by the *mṛdāṅga* drum). Over the next twenty-three years he established three additional presses. (Rūpa Vilāsa 40: 158)

<sup>55</sup> Technically, *smārtas* are any brahmins who follow secondary revelation (*smṛti*) (Flood 2003: 8) and who may or may not be affiliated with a particular sect such as Vaiṣṇava or Śaiva. The vast majority of brahmins, as observers of *smārta* practices, would be contrasted with those who, in addition to the same, would observe *śrauta* practices, or “that which is taught in the Śruti” (Sanderson 1993: 5). Bhaktivinoda and Bhaktisiddhānta mainly used the term disparagingly, often to refer to those brahmins who worship five gods (*pañcopāsana*) and adhere to Advaita Vedāntic views of ultimate reality.

<sup>56</sup> Bhaktisiddhānta’s condemnations of *smārta*-brahminism may reflect the actual prevailing situation at that time and place. It is, however, worth noting that *smārtas* exercised liberalising influence in some circumstances. William J. Jackson writes, “Conservatively, [the *smārtas*] promulgated Vedic authority and caste values, but innovatively they popularized Brahmanic ideas among lower twice-born castes, women and *śudras*, and they promoted Vedic ideas among Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva worshippers. They answered the heterodox challenge and gave religious access to the many by shaping the Purāṇic outlook during early medieval times, helping *bhakti* fervor spread” (W. J. Jackson: 265).

ing one or another form of hereditary privilege. As he saw it, the core problem persisting since soon after Caitanya's demise was misplaced respect, the consequence of which was individual and collective failure to progress toward pure devotion to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. A brief summary of his ideas on how to address this problem with selective use of *smṛti-śāstra*, Vaiṣṇava initiation, and devotional culture will be relevant to our account of the shift to a world mission of Kṛṣṇa worship and the pursuit of "felicity conditions" for religious truth.

### III.2.1. *Vaiṣṇava Smṛti and the Pursuit of Authentic Religion*

#### III.2.1.1 Two Principles for Selection of Smṛti-śāstra

I commenced discussion of Bhaktivinoda's participation in revisionist Hindu discourse by overviewing his 1869 apology for the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. In viewing his son's participation in the same discourse I will consider his approach to the *Haribhaktivilāsa*, the third of our set of three texts central to Caitanya Vaiṣṇava practice, and the one best characterised as *smṛti-śāstra*. Bhaktisiddhānta emphasized that Vaiṣṇavas are *selective* in their acceptance of *smṛti-śāstras*, or "those texts which contain *vidhi* (the "specific rules" of Rappaport's "liturgical order") based on the Dharmaśāstras and which are meant to regulate the living entities' ordinary dealings (*vyavahārika karya*)" (Bhumipati Dāsa: 179; BoVP 26).<sup>57</sup> Whatever *smṛti* texts support or affirm "*śuddha* (pure) *varṇāśrama-dharma*" are acceptable, since "*śuddha pāramahamśya* (pure swanlike) Vaiṣṇava *dharma*, which is beyond the *varṇāśrama* system" thrives in such an environment (Bhumipati Dāsa: 181-82; BoVP 29-30). Bhaktisiddhānta considered Pañcarātra generally superior to other types of *smṛti*, since it broadens the franchise on worship practice and centres qualification for worship in a process of purification that can be accomplished within this life (through mantra initiation and guidance from a guru), rather than purification over several lifetimes (with birth as the determining factor for qualification in this life).<sup>58</sup> Bhaktisiddhānta wrote,

<sup>57</sup> "BoVP" refers to a *Parīṣiṣṭha* (appendix) to a 1995 edition of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's *Brāhmaṇa o Vaiṣṇavera Tāratamya-Viśayaka Siddhānta*, "Conclusion in comparing Brahmins and Vaiṣṇavas." The *Parīṣiṣṭha* consists of excerpts from several of Bhaktisiddhānta's Bengali journal articles. The translations are basically those of Bhumipati Dāsa, with my own occasional slight rewording and insertion of pertinent Bengali terms.

<sup>58</sup> Bhaktisiddhānta allowed for a spectrum of applicability of particular *śāstras* and particular injunctions within *śāstras*, based on the principle of *adhikāra-bheda*. He mentions, for exam-

Whether one has lived in *gurukula* (a traditional brahmanical residential school) after accepting Vedic initiation or not, whether a brahmin has fallen from his religious vows or not, or whether one is born in a śūdra or lower than a śūdra family (*antyaja-kule*)—through pious activities, all can become eligible for receiving *pāñcarātri*ka initiation (*pāñcarātrikī dikṣā lābher adhikāra āche*). If any human being receives *pāñcarātri*ka initiation, he is certainly a twice-born (*dvijatva avaśyambhāvī*). Though women do not undergo the sacred thread ceremony, they also become twice-born (*tāñhārāo dvijahan*) and are thus qualified to chant the holy names (*nāma-yajña*) and perform *arcana*, etc. (Bhumipati Dāsa: 187; BoVP 34-35)

One conversant with brahmanical Vaiṣṇava practice of śālagrāma stone worship might ask whether Bhaktisiddhānta would defend the right of a śūdra or woman to perform such worship. Indeed, basing his argument on statements of Sanātana Gosvāmī in his HBV commentary,<sup>59</sup> Bhaktisiddhānta defended the propriety of śālagrāma-śilā worship by anyone, “regardless of *varṇa* (*ye kona kulodbhūta puruṣa*), [if he or she] is initiated into Viṣṇu mantras (*viṣṇu-mantre dikṣita*) by a qualified spiritual master (*sadguru*)” (Bhumipati Dāsa: 237; BoVP 81).

Having understood from Bhaktivinoda that *varṇāśrama* is *naimittika-dharma* (circumstantial duties), one might further ask what Bhaktisiddhānta meant by *śuddha-varṇāśrama-dharma*, that which *smṛti* texts are supposed to support or affirm. Whereas Bhaktivinoda distinguished sharply between *nitya-dharma* and *naimittika-dharma*, his son suggests a closer link between the two. In his view *śuddha-varṇāśrama-dharma* is based on the understanding that “[a]ll living entities, being by nature situated eternally in pure consciousness (*nitya-dharma-sattve pratiṣṭhita haiyā*), are qualified to understand Brahman (*brahma-jña*) and possess the qualities of goodness (*sattva-guṇa-prakāśātmā*)” (Bhumipati Dāsa: 203; BoVP 50). The brahmin *varṇa* is the default, natural *varṇa* to which all human beings potentially belong; the other *varṇas* accommodate varying degrees of ignorance of *brahman*, the ultimate

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ple, that Raghunandana and other *smārtas* had acknowledged “separate arrangements” from their own texts for the Vaiṣṇavas. From the other side, he refers to “spiritualist *smārtas*” who “have concluded that the non-devotional statements of *smṛtis* quoted in HBV are not meant to be followed by the Vaiṣṇavas” (Bhumipati Dāsa: 179; BoVP 27). Some other *smṛti* is also acceptable (Bhaktisiddhānta singles out the *Hārītasṁṛti* as applicable for Vaiṣṇavas (Bhumipati Dāsa: 177). On *Hārīta*, see Kane, I/1 p. 305: Referring to the confusing number and authorship of *Dharmaśāstras*, he says “the confusion is worse confounded by the fabrications of sectarian zeal, such as the *Hārītasṁṛti* which is full of Vaiṣṇavite teachings.”

<sup>59</sup> This refers to the *Ṭikā* on verses 5.451-55, in which the commentator affirms the HBV texts with further purāṇic prooftexts. Especially he elaborates on the term *sac-chūdrāṇām* (*sat-śūdrāṇām*) in verse 451, indicating that it refers to a śūdra who has been duly initiated as a Vaiṣṇava. Verse 452 states, “Whether a woman, śūdra, brahmin or kṣatriya etc., having worshipped a śālagrāma-śilā one attains the eternal abode.”

absolute reality. Hence, “the brahmins are situated as the root or topmost among these divisions of *varṇas*” (ibid., 203; ibid. 50). The *varṇas* are not designations of the self, but only of individuals’ gross and subtle bodies, and since the gross body is a product of the subtle body, not vice-versa, it is one’s qualities (*guṇa*) that determine *varṇa* more than birth (Bhumipati Dāsa: 206; BoVP 52-53). One must not conflate disposition with heredity (Bhaktisiddhānta 1933: 331). In Kali-yuga, the present fallen age, one must “earn one’s qualification to be twice-born by first being initiated according to the rules of the Vedic *Pañcarātras* (*prathame vaidika pañcarātrokta vidhi anusāre dīkṣita haiyā*) and thereafter accept the signs of a twice-born (*sāvitrīya-samskārera cihna dhāraṇa*)” (Bhumipati Dāsa: 212; BoVP 58).<sup>60</sup>

We might then wonder who should determine qualification within this pure *varṇāśrama* system, if one removes the objective or “digital” birth determinant. Bhaktisiddhānta answers that *varṇāśrama* should be regulated by Vaiṣṇavas who have transcended the shortcomings of conditioned beings:

Only a Vaiṣṇava is a qualified judge (*parīkṣaka*) for considering a person’s spiritual (*daiva*) *varṇāśrama* status, because he is not subservient [to the four defects of conditioned life, namely] to commit mistakes, to be illusioned, to cheat, [and to possess dull senses]. (Bhumipati Dāsa: 216; BoVP 63).<sup>61</sup>

Vaiṣṇava renewal entailed taking guidance from persons of extraordinary qualification in spiritual matters, but also in matters of practical concern such as determining a person’s appropriate *varṇa* and *āśrama* duties. While appropriately selected *smṛti-śāstra* regulates persons in a general way toward spiritual progress, extraordinarily qualified Vaiṣṇavas would be expected to provide specific direction. As we recall from our discussion of HBV (1.2.3.1), the guru gives direction how to perform *sādhana*. Similarly, according to Bhaktisiddhānta, he may determine one’s place in the *varṇāśrama* structures of ordinary human life.

As we noted in discussing Bhaktivinoda, properly conceived *varṇāśrama* societal values provided half the answer to the challenges of casteism and idolatry leveled against Hindus in modern times. The other half of his answer was *śaraṇāgati*, the

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<sup>60</sup> Just what Bhaktisiddhānta means by “*vaidika pañcarātra ukta vidhi*” is not clear. Whether he means “the rules within Pāñcarātra which are Vedic” or “the rules of Pāñcarātra, which is in fact Vedic,” he certainly wants to give Vedic sanctity to those who receive Pāñcarātric initiation.

<sup>61</sup> The reference to four defects (*bhrama*, *pramāda*, *vipralipsā*, and *karaṇāpātava*) recalls the same list invoked by Jīva Gosvāmī in his *Tattva-sandarbhā* (Anuccheda 9) to establish Vedāntic epistemology. It is also invoked twice in the CC (1.2.86 & 1.7.107).

pursuit of divine shelter. From the perspective of the practice of *śaraṇāgati*, the basic principle for selecting *smṛti* is *hari-sevānukūlatā*, conformity to whatever serves Hari. Bhaktisiddhānta quotes Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.200) to this effect: "O Great Sage, one should perform all actions, whether worldly (*laukiki*) or religious (*vaidiki*), as services for Hari. This is what should be done by one desirous of devotion" (trans., Haberman 2003: 63; BoVP 30). Such all-inclusiveness of Kṛṣṇa *sevā* suggests, again, a definite linking of ordinary with extraordinary spheres of action, or a subsuming of ordinary within extraordinary action, aimed at conformity to divine purpose. Yet, as we might expect, Bhaktisiddhānta insists that this linking or enveloping principle can be best observed by following an extraordinary person, a *paramahansa-vaiṣṇava*.<sup>62</sup>

### III.2.1.2. Importance of Haribhaktivilāsa and Pāñcarātra

Following these two principles of selection (*śuddha-varṇāśrama-dharma* and *hari-sevānukūlatā*), Sanātana Gosvāmī compiled *Haribhaktivilāsa* "for the benefit of the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal" (Bhumipati Dāsa: 177; BoVP 25). Bhaktisiddhānta saw as part of his mission the revival of Vaiṣṇava *smṛti*, especially HBV, in order to counteract the religious and social excesses of his time.<sup>63</sup> In his English journal *The Harmonist* he praised this text for its effect in opening up Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* practice to everyone:

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<sup>62</sup> The best example of a "*paramahansa-vaiṣṇava*" for Bhaktisiddhānta was the BhP figure Śuka, the son of Vyāsa and guru of King Parīkṣit (Bhumipati Dāsa: 195-97; BoVP 42-44). Despite Bhaktisiddhānta's enterprising nature as founder of his Gauḍīya Maṭh organisation, a case might be made that Bhaktisiddhānta modeled himself somewhat after the renunciant Śuka, seeing his own father Bhaktivinoda as reflecting the character of the householder Vyāsa. In any case, both Bhaktisiddhānta and his father were to become viewed by their followers with the highest regard for *their* spiritual accomplishment, as carriers of similar charisma as earlier personages whom they praised in their writings.

<sup>63</sup> Bhaktisiddhānta lamented rhetorically, "Alas, what a sorrowful condition! Today in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava society, the respect for the Vaiṣṇava *smṛti* written by Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī and instructed by Śrīman Mahāprabhu is no longer present! Though we identify ourselves as servants of the Vaiṣṇavas, we disgrace our line (*kulāṅgārera kārya*) by uprooting the practice of Vaiṣṇava *smṛtis*! And we consider those who are trying to revive the practice of Vaiṣṇava *smṛtis* as enemies!" (Bhumipati Dāsa: 180; BoVP: 28)

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī also promoted another, much shorter work regarded as authored by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, the *Sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā*, "Illumination on the essence of spiritual duties," a manual for performing *samśkāras* (sacraments) in the ways appropriate for Vaiṣṇavas. The authorship of this work is contested. G. C. Ghosh (Vrindavan Research Institute) claims that a different Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, namely the grandson of Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, was the author. In any case, Bhaktisiddhānta accepted the work as authoritative for the followers of Caitanya, and therefore his followers accept it as such. His enthusiasm for it is interesting: "The need of the pure devotees that Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura fulfilled by

Sree Haribhaktivilas has made the practice enjoined by the theistic Scriptures, which was available only to self-realised souls, accessible to all conditioned jivas [souls]. It has brought down the transcendental within the reach of mortals. (Bhaktisiddhānta 1932: 357)

And (in another article) with this conviction Bhaktisiddhānta asked rhetorically,

So why are we not following those Vaiṣṇava *smārtas*, who are great persons (*mahājanas*) conversant with spiritual knowledge, and instead are being misguided? Why are we turning away from scriptural knowledge and falling in the jugglery of the selfish nondevotees (*svārthāndha avaiṣṇava-gaṇera kuhake paḍiyā*), thus wasting our valuable lives in aversion to Hari? Will godless society (*paramārtha-virodhī samāja*) remain prominent forever? Will the beneficial words of the devotees, the subtle purport (*sukṣma tātparya*) of the *śāstras*, and the impartiality (*nirapekṣatā*) of the compilers of the *śāstras* be neglected forever? Will the glories (*mahimā*) of Śrī Haribhaktivilāsa ever remain fallen in the dark pit of the godless *smārtas*? (Bhumipati Dāsa: 192; BoVP 39)

For Bhaktisiddhānta, neglect of the HBV was tantamount to spiritual suicide. To counteract the pernicious influence of the “godless *smārtas*,” the HBV should be instated as the authoritative *smṛti-śāstra* for the Vaiṣṇavas. In this way, in all matters of formal or ritual behaviour prescribed by *smṛti-śāstra*, the Vaiṣṇavas would be protected from the deviations associated with illusionism, *māyāvāda*, and given access to “the practice enjoined by the theistic Scriptures.”

### III.2.1.3. Pāñcarātra-mārga and Bhāgavata-mārga

Such praise of the HBV must not, Bhaktisiddhānta felt, lead to excess in the opposite direction. Some Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas had taken the “*pāñcarātra-mārga*” or *arcana-mārga* (the path of ritual worship emphasized in HBV) to be central when in fact the “*bhāgavata-mārga*” characterised by performance of *kīrtana*, the loud chanting of the divine names, should be the centre of practice for followers of Śrī Caitanya. *Kīrtana* is, Bhaktisiddhānta noted, a “sacrifice” (*hari-nāma-yajña*) which a *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* (novice) becomes qualified to perform by receiving initiation from a *mahā-bhāgavata*, who is “beyond the principles of *varnāśrama*,” and “the best of the brah-

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preaching this book [*Sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā*] among the Vaiṣṇavas by the will of Śrī Gaurasundara [Caitanya], the pure Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava society will take a thousand years to repay this debt. And if Śrī Gaurasundara desires, then Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas can unanimously adopt the principles of this Vaiṣṇava *smṛti* in order to protect their purity” (Bhumipati Dāsa: 181; BoVP: 28-29). The importance of the *Sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā* for Bhaktisiddhānta is the fact that it specifically acknowledges the process of nurturing spiritual qualification through the *samskāra* system of purificatory rites, disregarding birth qualification.

mins and a Vaiṣṇava” (Bhumipati Dāsa: 185; BoVP 33). Just as Bhaktivinoda considered *varṇāśrama* supportive of *bhakti*, Bhaktisiddhānta considered Pañcarātra important within its proper supportive place, subordinated to the “*bhāgavata-mārga*,” the path of advanced devotion. He therefore regarded Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, the compiler of HBV, though an “ideal great person (*mahā-puruṣa*),” as primarily an “expert in Vaiṣṇava etiquette . . . worshipable for the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs*.” In other words, his *vidhi*-filled text is only peripherally relevant for *madhyama*- and *uttama-adhikārīs* (the middle to most advanced practitioners) (Bhumipati Dāsa: 186; BoVP 34).

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was somewhat innovative by introducing the terms “*pāñcarātrika-mārga*” and “*bhāgavata-mārga*.”<sup>64</sup> By making such a distinction, roughly parallel to Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *vaidhī-sādhana* versus *rāgānuga-sādhana*, his subordination of *pāñcarātra*- to *bhāgavata-mārga* carried an important institutional implication. It meant that *śikṣa-guru-paramparā*, the succession of spiritual teachings through prominent (charismatic) gurus, would be counted as more significant than *dīkṣā-guru-paramparā*, a succession of gurus bestowing formal initiation and mantra to their disciples but, for the most part, leaving little discernible mark in Vaiṣṇava history. This would be a radical, not uncontroversial interpretation of tradition, based on Bhaktisiddhānta’s conviction that the substance of *dīkṣā* is *śikṣā*, namely “the knowledge of serving the transcendental Lord through the process of disciplic succession” (Bhumipati Dāsa: 211; BoVP: 58).<sup>65</sup>

This subordination of *dīkṣā* to *śikṣā* did *not* mean that the practice of bestowing *dīkṣā* should be abandoned. Similarly, *arcanam* should continue, with the under-

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<sup>64</sup> That there were, in early Vaiṣṇava history, two different groups, the Pāñcarātras and the Bhāgavatas, is known, though very little is known about their relationship to each other (Colas: 230-35). According to one Pāñcarātric text (the *Pādma-samhitā*), one group of Pāñcarātrins, known as the Bhāgavatas, received *dīkṣā* and were exclusively authorized to perform rituals for the sake of others, i.e. to perform temple worship. Yet more complicated is a reference in the tenth century *Āgama-prāmānya* of Yāmuna, which describes four categories of Bhāgavatas (Rastelli 2003a). Bhaktisiddhānta appropriates the two terms, identifying them as two different “paths” that have a common aim with differing emphases.

<sup>65</sup> Bhaktisiddhānta’s ideas about *śikṣa*- versus *dīkṣā-guru-paramparā* (instructional verses initiatory disciplic succession) are by no means uncontroversial among practicing Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas today. See Brzezinski 1996 for an overview of this controversy and its consequences for present and future ISKCON, the institution founded by Bhaktisiddhānta’s disciple A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. In Brzezinski’s view, the nature of the controversy puts into question the durability of ISKCON, a question that may well only be resolved by time. For apologetic defenses of Bhaktisiddhānta and his disciplic line, see Narasingha Swami (1998) and Swami Tripurāri (1998). See also O’Connell (1999: 219-23 and *passim*) on the ambiguities of *sampradāya* in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition.

standing that it was subordinate to and meant to lead the practitioner to *bhajana*, or the direct worship of Kṛṣṇa performed by the adept. Bhaktisiddhānta wrote in 1933,

But *archana* is not to be confounded with *bhajana*. *Kirtana* that is performed by the *sadhu* is *bhajana*. All the activities of the Paramahansa are on the level of the *kirtana* of the Name. But the conditioned soul has no faculty by which he can realise the nature of the *kirtana* of the Name that is practiced by the Paramahansa. Neither is the performer of *archana* in a position to understand the ways of the Paramahansa. But the performer of *archana* understands the necessity of worshipping the Icon under the absolute direction of the Paramahansa. He is in a position to do so because he knows truly that transcendence is located beyond the scope of his faculties. It is not till the performer of *archana* is fully liberated from the domination of the deluding function of the mundane faculties of the conditioned state by the continuing mercy of the *sadhu* that he is enabled by the same agency to obtain access to *bhajana* or transcendental service on the fully cognisable plane of the Absolute. (*The Harmonist*, vol. XXX. no. 7, January 1933, p. 196)

One is reminded of Bhaktivinoda's distinction between the "physical school" and the "ideal school" of *śrī-mūrti* worship in Bhaktisiddhānta's distinction between *arcana* and *bhajana*. For Bhaktisiddhānta, *kīrtana*, the chanting of the divine name, is the link between the two and an utter necessity for the performer of *arcana*. Having explained that the divine name is the aurally accessible form of *arcā*, he continued:

The *Archa* as Icon cannot be served *independently* of the Name in the present Age. In no Age is the Icon really and fully served by any other faculty independently of the aural. (*Ibid.* 194)

Thus Bhaktisiddhānta, while reiterating themes treated by his father and mentor Bhaktivinoda, also firmly situated the practice of *arcanam* as integral to his preaching mission. As mentioned above, he established image worship in his many temples, and for the regular worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Gaurāṅga he saw to the publication of a procedure manual, *Arcana-paddhati*, based on the HBV

### III.2.2. Reform and Resistance in Bhaktivinoda and Bhaktisiddhānta

Throughout this discussion of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Caitanya Vaiṣṇava revivalism, spiritual qualification of practitioners has been a persistent theme. The overarching argument of these two writers, addressing both caste and idolatry issues, has been to insist that spiritual (*paramārthika*) supercedes mundane (*vyavahārika*) qualification and that spiritual qualification can be identified as

knowledge of *brahman*, comprehended best by adept Vaiṣṇavas. For worship practices, the upshot of their assertions was that the “digital” dimension of birth should be subordinated to the “analogue” dimension of spiritual qualification (see II.1.4). An important consequence would be to open the worship franchise to (at least theoretically) anyone willing to adopt the prescribed practices (inevitably with institutional consequences); at the same time, the simplicity of assessing qualification by birth would necessarily give way to the difficulty of assessing qualification by realisation.

For Bhaktisiddhānta, this spiritual orientation for all value assessment was both the means of *maintaining* the original purpose of the *varṇāśrama* system as he saw it and the means of fostering *reform* of individuals. His article “Gandhiji’s Ten Questions” (in *The Harmonist*, vol. XXX, no. 7, January 1933), is telling in this regard. Responding to well-known challenges on untouchability and temple access from Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Bhaktisiddhānta displayed an interesting mix of liberalism of one open to social reform and conservatism of one whose only criteria for qualification to approach a temple image was spirituality. On the one hand, he wrote, “it is a matter for the consideration of the nation whether it is time to admit [untouchables] on a footing of social equality on the ground that the causes of keeping aloof from them have ceased to exist” (204). On the other hand, “[According to the *smṛti texts*] the *Archa* (Icon) must not be worshipped by a non-Brahmana i.e., by any one who has no real knowledge of Godhead (203-204) . [hence] those who have no real faith in the spiritual nature of the worshippers or the *Archa* are forbidden to have a sight of the Icon” (204). Bhaktisiddhānta plays with Gandhi’s term “non-violent non-cooperation” to drive home his point on spiritual value:

The nature of the restrictions, which are imposed by the *Shastras* on one’s intercourse with the opponents of the *Shastras*, may be described as non-violent spiritual non-co-operation in every affair. All intimate mixing with such people for any purpose whatever must be avoided on principle. But this is to be done in such a way as not to hurt the worldly susceptibilities of any person or group . It may not be superfluous to add that spiritual living is impossible unless one is prepared to conduct oneself as the inferior of all other entities. Those alone who are exclusive servants of the Absolute Truth, are really in a position to pay full honour to all entities. Non-co-operation with the vagaries of the mind and body is due to the most profound respect for and faith in the superiority of every entity to oneself. [This] genuine attitude of unreserved service of all entities is implied in the whole-time spiritual service of the Absolute in the form of *archana*. There can be no ‘untouchables’ in this method. (205-206)

For Bhaktisiddhānta, “non-cooperation,” though having a valid basis in śāstric considerations of purity, was above all the principle of internal disciplined resistance to the “vagaries of the mind and body” required to accomplish the internal reform prerequisite to social reform. And the key to both types of reform would be the “attitude of unreserved service of all entities” required in *arcanam*, the formal worship of śrī-mūrti.

Both Bhaktivinoda and Bhaktisiddhānta were open to the principle of religious reform espoused by their contemporaries insofar as it meant making the means of gaining spiritual qualification more accessible. But they were resistant to what they considered the general shortsightedness of reform passing under the name of “Hinduism,” with the term’s national and ethnic associations.<sup>66</sup> For them, the encompassing vision, surpassing both Indian and Western notions of universalism, was the worldview of the spiritually exalted Vaiṣṇava. Like other Hindu reformers, both showed confidence in traditional texts, and enlisted them in support of their own sort of progressiveness (King: 105, 119).<sup>67</sup> For Bhaktivinoda, Vyāsa was the exemplary reformer, setting the spiritual pace for modern reform in the BhP; and for Bhaktisiddhānta, selected texts (including BhP and HBV) supported his *daiva-varṇāśrama* notion that could provide the social backdrop for activating spiritual upward mobility toward the sort of perfection he and his father considered universally desirable, namely instatement in eternal service to Kṛṣṇa.

### III.3. BHAKTIVEDANTA: TRAINING AS THE KEY TO A SPIRITUAL SOCIETY

#### III.3.1. From Gandhian to Caitanyaite: Bhaktivedanta Swami Begins his Mission

One young Gandhian to whom this Caitanyaite universalism appealed was Abhaya Caran De (1896-1977). A graduate of Calcutta’s Scottish Church College who had refused his diploma out of protest against British colonial rule, Abhay was impressed by Bhaktisiddhānta’s unconventional wisdom.

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<sup>66</sup> Note a general trend of Hindu reformers after 1880 to re-assess more positively Indian tradition. See, for example, Sharpe, 74-75. Bhaktivinoda’s and Bhaktisiddhānta’s writings can be seen as part of this trend, but with their own stamp of resistance to “Hinduism” as the appropriate locus of revision.

<sup>67</sup> Rammohan Roy placed confidence in the Upaniṣads while largely rejecting purāṇic literature; the Caitanyaite, as we have seen, fixed confidence most fully in the BhP.

According to Bhaktisiddhānta, Indian *svarāj* (independence) was not the priority Gandhi said it was, nor was it a prerequisite for propagating Caitanya’s spiritual message to the world. Seeing Abhay’s Vaiṣṇava upbringing and English language competence, in their initial 1922 meeting Bhaktisiddhānta encouraged him to take up the Caitanya cause. In 1936, days before his demise, Bhaktisiddhānta reconfirmed by letter his wish that Abhay dedicate himself to propagating Caitanya Vaiṣṇava teachings in the English language. “You try to preach whatever you have learned from me to the English-knowing people in English. That will do good to you and to the people to whom you shall preach. That is my instruction” (690207ba.la).<sup>68</sup>

From his guru, Abhay (known since receiving initiation from Bhaktisiddhānta in 1933 as Abhaya-caranāravinda Dāsa) imbibed Caitanya Vaiṣṇava theology and tradition and a deepened faith in the ways of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* he had gathered in childhood from his father, Gaur Mohan De. Equally important for his future mission, he assimilated his guru’s confidence in the printed word as a key medium of propagation. Beginning in 1944 with a modest journal, *Back to Godhead* (BTG), up to publication of his own translation and commentary to the BhP (the first of its twelve books or *skandhas*) in 1964, Abhay chalked out the ideas he would soon deploy to extend “Krishna consciousness” worldwide. Indeed, from early on in these writings, worldwide mission was a central theme for Bhaktivedānta (Bhaktivedānta Swami, as Abhaya became known after 1959 having received *sannyāsa* initiation).

More than his two predecessors, Bhaktivedānta Swami made the *Bhagavad-gītā* central to his preaching, as the “preliminary study” for the BhP and the basis for properly comprehending the CC (BTG 161). This seven-hundred-verse Sanskrit poem had long held a place of honour for Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas and was regularly cited in their writings.<sup>69</sup> But only since the late nineteenth century had it become the popular, widely read text nationalists championed as “the spiritual charter and decla-

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<sup>68</sup> The code reference refers to the recorded lecture, catalogued by the Bhaktivedānta Archives. The first two digits refer to the year, hence it was delivered in 1969.

<sup>69</sup> See Schweig (2001) on Kṛṣṇadāsa’s limited use of the *Gītā* in his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. The *Gītā* has certainly held authority in the tradition as part of the *prasthāna-traya*, the threefold basis for Vedānta, and was often cited to support Vaiṣṇava-Vedāntic views by Bhaktivedānta’s predecessor commentators. It may well have, as Eric Sharpe suggests, “played little or no part in the formation of the Chaitanya movement” (Sharpe, 141) on a popular level, but it was certainly invoked in learned discourse. Still, as Sharpe rightly notes (see next fn.), authority is different from popularity, and certainly Bhaktivedānta took cue from its rapid popularisation to make it central to his mission in the West.

ration of independence of the Indian people” (Sharpe: 169).<sup>70</sup> Both welcoming this popularity and protesting what he considered its political malappropriation and *māyāvāda* misinterpretation, Bhaktivedanta challenged popular translators (such as Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and the “hired ‘Pandit’” of the Geeta Press edition) (BTG 144, 156)<sup>71</sup> for obscuring what he deemed to be the text’s overarching message and ultimate sacred postulate—exclusive devotion to the “Supreme Personality of Godhead,” Śrī Kṛṣṇa.<sup>72</sup> Much as Bhaktivinoda had urged *Bhāgavatam* reading with qualified assistance, Bhaktivedanta saw it as his duty to make available the traditional method of interpretation: One should accept a teacher representative of a Vaiṣṇava *guru-paramparā*, a disciplic succession of Vaiṣṇava adepts. Only from such a guru could one hope to grasp the devotional message and apply it in one’s own life.

Linked to *Bhagavad-gītā* preaching would be promotion of the universal applicability of *varṇāśrama* disengaged from hereditary considerations as the only effective means for realising a spiritually “classless society.” Applying the understanding of his Vaiṣṇava predecessors regarding the spiritual aim of this social system and its basis in qualification rather than birth, Bhaktivedanta hoped to demonstrate these principles by instituting a system of training, located in a “Geeta Nagri” (Skt: *nagari*), or “preaching centre” dedicated for this purpose (BTG 106). In a 1956 *Back To Godhead* article “How to Broadcast the Teachings of Bhagawat Geeta,” Bhaktivedanta wrote,

From Geeta Nagri this universal Truth [of the Gītā] must be propagated systematically so that real human society may be reestablished for the benefit of all, dividing men according to natural mode . . . Such social order all over the world will be known as the *Institution of quality caste system* and every human being will have the right to qualify himself by education and culture to enter into the higher status of life in the same manner as the varsity of different states offers the facility to any one (BTG 114, italics in original).

From such preaching centres, the “universal Truth” of the Gītā would be propagated through the “*yajña*” of *harināma-samkīrtanam*, congregational singing or chanting of

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<sup>70</sup> Sharpe summarises the back-and-forth process by which the Gītā gained this status, having gone West initially in Charles Wilkins’ 1785 English translation, eventually to be “fed back into India” by the Theosophists, through whom Gandhi first read it (in English translation) (Sharpe: 169).

<sup>71</sup> “BTG” refers to Bhaktivedanta’s journal *Back To Godhead*. Page references are to the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust publication of his collected journals, 1994 (see Sources).

<sup>72</sup> Although Bhaktivedanta took issue with Dr. Radhakrishnan’s Gītā translation, he made use of it when writing his own translation.

Kṛṣṇa's holy names, to be accomplished by "parties for melodious musical chanting of the powerful mantras of the Vedas," and by "press and platform propaganda."

This operation is also performed for the mass enlightenment by the process of press and platform propaganda. For such press and platform propaganda we require everything including the machine, the paper, the ink, the broadcasting equipments, the propagandists, the conveyances and all other contingencies that are meant for their maintenance. (BTG 108)

For Bhaktivedanta, the use of "everything" for propagation would exemplify modern-day *yukta-vairāgya* (appropriate, or engaged, detachment), a principle found in Rūpa Gosvāmin's *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (2.255) and "the essence of all Caitanya philosophy" (Bhaktivedanta: *Vaiṣiṣṭyāṣṭakam* 1.9). By this principle, authentic renunciation requires perception and acceptance of any and all objects of this world solely in relation to Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sambandha*) in a spirit of detachment (*anāsakta*). In this spirit "propaganda" could be organised and funded by persons schooled in the Gītā's teaching on *karma-yoga* (action or work dedicated to God), awakening "mass enlightenment" to counteract the forces of evil perpetuating the current disturbed conditions of the world.

From a 1949 letter to the Gandhi Memorial National Fund trustees it is clear that Bhaktivedanta viewed existing temples as originally meant to be such centres for spiritual training and upliftment. If conceived as educational centres, such questions as who could or could not be allowed entry would be resolved. In a 1957 letter to the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Bhaktivedanta wrote:

So simple criticism of cinema houses will not fulfill the purpose. We have to create tangible interest in the temples for spiritual advancement of knowledge. With that purpose in view, it is necessary that the priests and pujaris must be enlightened men both in Theism and Sanskrit language also. They shall be primary teachers of the Bhagavad-gita in different temples. Both these temples and their management have to be reformed in the present context. We shall have to accommodate the process of temple entry by all classes of people but they may be so admitted for proper qualification and not for the purpose of a mere show." (Letter to K.M. Munshi, 57-02-21, Bhaktivedanta Vedabase [Historical])<sup>73</sup>

To translate idea into action would require an organisation, initially to be called the "League of Devotees" (a take-off on the League of Nations) with, for a short time, headquarters in the city of Jhansi (Uttara Pradesh), and a charter setting out the so-

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<sup>73</sup> The reference date is in reverse order (the letter date was 21 February, 1957), following the Vedabase search system.

ciety's aims. Among the charter's fourteen listed aims Bhaktivedanta elaborated his theme of training for higher socio-religious qualification, adding that any qualified member might receive formal initiation and recognition as a brahmin. Here he also delineated plans for including the *āśrama* element of the *varṇāśrama* system in his scheme. The thirteenth aim was:

To accept membership of all orders of life [*āśramas*], namely (i) *Brahmachari* i.e. unmarried scholars fully devoted to the service of Godhead. (ii) *Grihasthas* i.e. married householders living with family but devoted to the service of Godhead. (iii) *Banapasthas* (Sanskrit: *vanaprasthas*) i.e. retired householders not living with the family but devoted to the service of Godhead. (iv) *And Sanyasis (sic) or Tyagis* i.e. retired householders fully renounced to the service of Godhead without any family attachment. (BTG 132)

“Devoted to the service of Godhead” was a quality to be secured and strengthened in large measure by observance of abstinence vows. The fourteenth and final aim of the League was

To initiate members in the rules of the Goswamins<sup>74</sup> . . . by controlling over (i) *illegitimate connections with woman* (ii) *intoxicating habit* (iii) *diet regulated with vegetable dishes* (iv) *gambling unnecessary sporting or recreation enterprises*. (BTG 132, italics in original)

The restrictions on diet, sexuality, intoxicating substances, and forms of recreation would become a trademark of the Swami's future mission, as well as (predictably, perhaps) a source of considerable consternation and challenge, both for members and observers. Noteworthy here (as Bhaktivedanta explained in a later BTG article), is the link he made between mass social reform and the observance of self-restraint by public leaders:

These moral principles are to be observed especially by the public leader, a learned Brahmin, a religionist and by the head of executive department of the state. Unless such persons are strictly moral by the above codes we cannot expect any citizen of the state to follow the moral principle. The public leader cannot be a successful leader if he is not serious about the above moral principles. (BTG 154)

He further noted favourably the example of Mahatma Gandhi, who “became a successful public leader because he observed the above moral principles in life.”

Although he was a married man during his leadership of the country he completely abstained himself from all sorts of bodily relation with his married

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<sup>74</sup> This refers to the “six Gosvāmis,” the principal followers of Caitanya in Vrindavan.

wife . . . what to speak of making unholy connection with other codes of life.<sup>75</sup> (BTG 154)

That spiritual leaders must embody their teachings by showing exemplary behaviour would be a persistent theme in his future mission.

Bhaktivedanta, like his two predecessors, participated in the current revisionist Hindu discourse. As an early Gandhian, Bhaktivedanta later retained some attitudes showing family resemblance to Gandhian themes. In fact, in a May 1956 BTG article he acknowledged his appreciation for some of Gandhi's ideas and practices, such as his daily evening prayer meetings; his temple entry movement; the Harijana movement; and Gandhi's penchant for austerity (BTG 107). It is also likely that he drew inspiration for his own mission from Gandhi's ability to affect and mobilize the Indian masses and to evoke worldwide sympathy for his cause. Like Gandhi, and later Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), he championed a reformed caste system based on qualification, and like both he argued for the universality of *varṇāśrama* (Sharma 2002: 274-85; Minor 1997).

Although there were areas of agreement with contemporary revisionist Hindu thinkers and activists, Bhaktivedanta felt that none of them matched Caitanya's stature and message of pure Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*. In another 1956 BTG article (commenting on verses from the CC), he wrote,

India is now free to act in the cultural field. The people outside India are all really anxious to receive the message of peace and happiness from the land of India. Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Vivekananda Swami, Sri Aravinda [Aurobindo] etc. tried to give the message in a mixture of material activities and therefore the same could not be assimilated. The message of peace and happiness in its pure form which delights the heart to the transcendental happiness is the message of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. (BTG 90)

Bhaktivedanta was confident that he could provide what the West was waiting for without sullyng the enterprise with the "mixture of material activities" well-meaning reformers were prone to include.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> As Joseph O'Connell notes (personal conversation), Bhaktivedanta's emphasis on "the rules of the Goswamins" may have been inspired by Gandhi, whose mother had him take vows before a Jaina saint before he departed for England.

<sup>76</sup> Bhaktivedanta, like Bhaktisiddhānta, was particularly critical of Gandhi's involvement in politics and deemed him inappropriately called "Mahatma" or great soul (BTG 82-83). He was also (again, like Bhaktisiddhānta) critical of Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) for his involvement with welfare activities in the name of spirituality, as well as for his Advaita

*Bhagavad-gītā* taught by a qualified guru; *harināma-saṁkīrtana* executed with modern facilities in the attitude of *yukta-vairāgya*; universal *varṇāśrama*; monastic or semi-monastic rules of conduct; and a missionary vision rooted in Caitanyaite spirituality—these would be the pillars of Bhaktivedānta’s mission, to be transplanted in the West and eventually brought back to India with a small but dedicated group of white-skinned, young American converts.

Clearly Bhaktivedanta had wide-ranging missionary ideas and aspirations formulated well before departing Vrindavan for America in 1965. For him, the concept of mission was rooted in a two-fold notion of replication. First was a sense of personal mission, reliving the plight and eventual heroism of the *Gītā*’s protagonist, Arjuna. Out of such personal sacrifice—following the order of his guru as Arjuna followed the order of Kṛṣṇa—would come his own realisation of the truth of the *Gītā*.<sup>77</sup> To understand the *Gītā* was to live its message: One must become Kṛṣṇa’s devotee by doing his will, this being to broadcast the message of Kṛṣṇa as Caitanya, and Caitanya’s message being to chant Kṛṣṇa’s name, worship Kṛṣṇa, and to follow Kṛṣṇa’s instructions (as found in the *Gītā* and *BhP*).<sup>78</sup> By such personal sacrifice, the second replication would be effected, namely cultural replication. As an embodiment of a tradition centred in devotional sacrifice, Bhaktivedanta hoped to effect a transformation in his future Western audiences that would draw from them a similar readiness to undertake the sacrifice of dedicating one’s life to Kṛṣṇa’s service.

From 1954 until his departure for New York in September 1965, Bhaktivedanta lived mostly alone, and mainly in Vrindavan. He left his family permanently in 1954, having abandoned hope that his wife and children would ever show interest and support for his preaching efforts. Further personal disappointments came when his pharmaceutical enterprise in Allahabad was burglarized and his attempt to secure a property for his League of Devotees in Jhansi was foiled (Goswami, S. D. 2002: I.150-64).

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Vedāntic viewpoint. Yet, as with Gandhi, there are obvious parallels between Bhaktivedanta and Vivekananda that space limit prevents me from exploring.

<sup>77</sup> Continuing my earlier speculation on Bhaktivinoda and Bhaktisiddhānta identifying with Vyāsa and Śuka respectively, Bhaktivedanta Swami’s repeated reference to Arjuna and his situation might suggest that he identified rather closely with the hero of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. All three exemplars would be considered ideal (charismatic) worshippers of Kṛṣṇa, but Arjuna, as a warrior, provides a model especially useful for Bhaktivedanta to inspire missionary zeal in his followers. See next chapter.

<sup>78</sup> This summary of Caitanya’s order is found in Vr̥ndāvanadāsa Ṭhākura’s sixteenth century Bengali work *Caitanya-bhāgavata* 2.13.8-9.

Also disheartening for him was the prevailing indifference to spirituality he encountered in the leaders and institutions of the newly independent India. Since Independence, in addition to other writing Bhaktivedanta addressed letters canvassing support for his cause to various Indian political and cultural leaders. But these appeals drew polite, non-committal replies at best, confirming that the central government's secular policy fostered deafness to his spiritual ideals.<sup>79</sup>

Soon after taking *sannyāsa* vows in 1959 Bhaktivedanta expressed another disappointment in his 1961 homage to Bhaktisiddhānta on the occasion of the latter's Vyāsa-pūjā observance in Vrindavan.<sup>80</sup> Distraught by the split-up of Bhaktisiddhānta's mission into several warring (and litigating) factions soon after his 1936 demise, Bhaktivedanta had kept largely aloof from his godbrothers, whom he considered spiritually wanting, deviated from their guru's order to preach.<sup>81</sup> With strong words he scolded his godbrothers, pleading with them to unite to fulfill their guru's order:

24. *Now all of you are returning here on his order to worship him on his Vyāsa-pūjā day—All together you are engaged in His worship.*

25. *But a festival of flowers and fruits is not the real worship:  
One who serves the guru's message really worships him.*

29. *Oh shame! Brother, aren't you at all embarrassed  
Behaving like businessmen to increase your followers?*

30. *Our master has said to preach;*

*Let the neophytes go in the temples to do nothing but ring bells.*

31. *All these are not our master's preaching methods;  
These are the things done by the caste goswamis.*

32. *But just take a look at the miserable condition that's arisen:  
Everyone has become a sense enjoyer and has abandoned preaching.*

33. *Now the temple doors also are starting to be locked.*

*Go and preach this Bhāgavata-dharma; don't delay any longer.*

39. *You have become renouncers, my brothers, so renounce everything.*

*But if you renounce the instruction of the spiritual master, what kind of renunciation is that?*

47. *Is it really such a difficult task to come together like this?*

*And why does so much have to be said to you?*

48. *Give up your stubbornness, act for the welfare of others:*

<sup>79</sup> See for example Bhaktivedanta's letter to the Gandhi Memorial National Fund trustees (July 5, 1949) pleading that funds be used to promote Gandhi's spiritual ideals.

<sup>80</sup> Vyāsa-pūjā, the worship of Vyāsa, is observed by Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas on the *avirbhava-tīthi*, the birthday (according to lunar calendar) of the guru.

<sup>81</sup> "Godbrother" is a term Bhaktivedanta used as a translation of the Bengali *guru-bhai*—indicating relationship by formal initiation by a common guru.

*There is no time to waste! All my brothers, come: this is the most auspicious time to unite. (Vaiṣiṣṭyāṣṭakam—Bhaktivedanta Vedabase)*

This excerpt also shows yet another disappointment, related to a concern of his predecessors: In his view the Gauḍīya Maṭha temples, meant to be places for spiritual training and upliftment, had degenerated after Bhaktisiddhānta's demise into means of livelihood for self-aggrandising neophytes. The very attitude Bhaktisiddhānta had so vigorously opposed (temple maintenance only for self-serving interests by *smārtas* and Vaiṣṇava-*santānas*) had, Bhaktivedanta believed, now become entrenched in the devotees' minds.

From these circumstances, despite advanced age, and sure he had the blessings of his guru and previous prominent Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas, Bhaktivedanta would venture West. There he might recruit assistants for his mission and maybe even establish a modest temple wherein he could train *mleccha*-turned-brahmin students to worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *mūrtis* and become “devoted to the service of Godhead.”<sup>82</sup>

#### III.4. CAITANYA VAIṢṆAVA UNIVERSALISM AND PARTICULARISM

The above account of three nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Caitanya Vaiṣṇava revivalists aims to help us contextualise the transition from an “embodied community” such as the Rādhāramaṇa temple to a “missionizing tradition” (Holdrege 2003: 119-20), an outward-moving international mission, as the new context for image worship in the West. In important ways Bhaktivinoda and his son Bhaktisiddhānta articulated a Caitanya Vaiṣṇava universalism as a response to the universalist claims of modernity and as the basis for reaching beyond India with Caitanya's message of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*; and Bhaktivedanta took his predecessors' ideas further toward implementation as an enduring world mission.<sup>83</sup>

Universal religion and universalism were important themes no less among revision Caitanyaitees than among other Hindu revisionists, from whom the former at

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<sup>82</sup> Already from 1933-1935 there had been an attempt at mission in England and Germany, conducted by *sannyāsi* disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta (see Bon). Bhaktivedanta Swami would later refer to those efforts as failures due to lack of any permanent establishment in those countries, in contrast to his own mission (for example, 690207ba.la; 750523cc.mel).

<sup>83</sup> This is not to say that Bhaktivedanta Swami was the first Caitanyaite missionary to the West. See Carney, 1998, on Bābā Premānanda Bhārati's arrival in New York in 1902. Also Bhaktisiddhānta sent missionaries (three *sannyāsis*) to England and Germany from 1933 to 1936: See Purī Goswāmī (156-57).

least partially drew ideas. Like other Hindu revisionists, Caitanyites subscribed to what Arvind Sharma calls “the denominational approach” to universal religion, namely asserting that salvation is open to all (1998: 6-7, 9), possibly within an individual’s present lifetime. This entailed, for Hindu revisionists generally and for Caitanyites as well, in varied formulations, subordination of social rank considerations to spiritual potential and practice. Recalling Roy Rappaport’s hierarchical dimension of liturgical orders, we can say that all revisionists agreed in principle on a modified “cosmological axiom,” namely that the *varṇa*-based divine order of the “classified universe” (B. K. Smith 1994) is subordinated to the order of divine will and the devotee’s *bhakti*.

Caitanyaite departures from other revisionists regarding universalist thinking centred on the nature of salvation and how it might be attained. But more importantly for Caitanyaite, by subordinating salvation (*mokṣa* or *mukti*) to Kṛṣṇa-preman (pure love of God), they questioned all other universalisms based on the assumed ultimacy of salvation. This was the distinctive Caitanyaite “missiological approach” to universalism (Sharma 1998: 5-6, 9) insofar as it aimed to draw all souls toward Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa’s service (as “ultimate sacred postulate”) rather than toward Advaita Vedāntic non-theistic liberation. Caitanyaite doctrine and missiology was fiercely “personalistic,” proclaiming the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa, the identification of Caitanya as Kṛṣṇa (or Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa), the reality and eternality of individual souls, and a method for approaching spiritual perfection tailored for the present fallen age (Kali-yuga), namely chanting of God’s names and worship of God as *śrī-mūrti*. Unlike some revisionist Advaita Vedāntic approaches that seemed to follow Śankara in relegating *bhakti* to a provisional, functional step toward liberation, Vaiṣṇava revisionism held fast to the ultimacy of *bhakti*, even if lower (provisional, pre-liberation) and higher (post-liberation) levels of devotional practice and realisation were to be acknowledged. Yet, as we have seen in chapter one, this subordination of *mukti* to *bhakti* was already articulated much earlier. The difference now was the broadened horizon. *Bhakti* could be practiced by anyone, *because everyone everywhere fit potentially somewhere within the varṇāśrama system*.

The distinctive features of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava mission might seem to point away from universalism to the particularities of worship cult—of person, events, locale, and specified liturgical order—and we may wonder if this was not in fact a retreat from modernity rather than a genuine response to it. Yet, as Brian Hatcher has noted,

though modernity can be understood largely as a striving for universalism based on rationalism, it has exhibited a counter-stream of particularism, or the concern with history's and individuals' particulars (Hatcher 1999: 36, 40).<sup>84</sup> Thus Caitanya Vaiṣṇava "particularism" might be seen as an attempt to respond to this current of modernity while resisting modernity's universalism insofar as it aimed for conformity and uniformity. By this emphasis on the particulars of Kṛṣṇa's name, form, and exploits, Caitanyaites sought to retain the embodied quality of the tradition while shedding other aspects of embodiment that made it an "embodied community." By becoming a "missionizing tradition" the embodied community of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas did not become disembodied; rather it became *re*-embodied in a missionizing form, enabling accelerated replication of devotional communities.

A further dimension of particularity is individuality. The reform of individual lives has been one theme of this chapter, and one might see this either as a "new" development attributable to modernity and Western notions of individuality, or as part of an ongoing theme in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition and the greater *bhakti* movement in early modern India. In either case, all of the authors discussed here were concerned to recover, make, or otherwise ensure societal and conceptual space for the sort of self-transformation or "self-realisation" they consider possible and deeply necessary in the practice of pre- and post-liberation Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*. This concern informed Bhaktivinoda's defense of image worship (as an aid to the transformational process, but also as a goal in itself) and his redefinition of "idolatry" (as any practice unfavourable to the development of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*); it informed Bhaktisiddhānta's analysis of *śuddha-varṇāśrama* (as societal ranking to support engendering a progressively developed service attitude); and it informed Bhaktivedanta's plan for a League of Devotees, with temples functioning as training centres to qualify individuals for each *varṇa* and *āśrama*. All these writers viewed conduciveness to the development of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* to one's utmost capacity as their sole criterion for accepting any sort of social or religious reform. Individual reform was likewise a force for missionary expansion: Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* was not only for a select few, nor for a delimited locale.

This is not to say the spiritual reform of individuals was a concern unique to the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. There is a notable parallel between these Vaiṣṇavas' renewed

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<sup>84</sup> Hatcher follows David Harvey in seeing "'two currents of sensibility' that have shaped the meaning and expression of modernity" (Hatcher 1999: 40).

emphasis on devotion as a culture of self-transformation and the broader revisionist Hindu celebration of “personal experience” as validator of religious truth.<sup>85</sup> To Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905) and Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1886), two important leaders of the Brahmo Samaj, the final arbiter of religious truth was *ātmapratyaya* (self-evidence) or *sahaja-jñāna* (intuition) (Halbfass 1988: 396-97). Similarly Bhaktivinoda, defending Caitanyaite tradition, privileged *svataḥ-pramāna* (self-validating knowledge) and what he called “*sahaja-samādhi*” (spiritual intuition) (Dasa, S. N.: 147) over revealed scripture and defended image worship on the strength of sages’ experiencing divine form in states of *viśuddha jñāna-yoga* (pure communion in knowledge). Paradoxically, for both parties, privileging personal experience (particularism) went hand in hand with universalisation of religion, since it promised expanded accessibility to a common ground of religion. For the modern Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas, sacred texts provided essential means for grasping and meaningfully interpreting the full range of one’s experience, from the most ordinary to the most extraordinary. And while these texts were to be made available to all, access to the truths of devotion was simultaneously confidential, received (by the descending path—*avaroha-panthā*) through a narrow channel of disciplic succession guarded by a system of initiation and imbibed through the personal guidance of a guru.

Western universalism had both secular and religious dimensions. In becoming a missionizing tradition, Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇavas took cues from Christian missionary activity in their midst. Proclamation of Jesus Christ as universal saviour by Christian missionaries prompted the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas to respond in kind. Bhaktivinoda’s use of a Christian term in referring to Caitanya as the “Savior of Nadia” was not inadvertent.<sup>86</sup> Comparing Caitanya to Christ, Caitanya was viewed by his followers as equally if not more universally a saviour, and in any case a viable home-grown alternative. Further, the Christian missionaries’ insistence that redemption was afforded by a personal God incarnate gave impetus for the Vaiṣṇavas to counter Advaita

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<sup>85</sup> As Wilhelm Halbfass has shown, neo-Hindu and neo-Vedāntic celebrations of the primacy of experience in Indian religion and philosophy show a marked departure from traditional brahmanical (especially Advaita Vedānta and Pūrva-mīmāṃsā) discourse, wherein considerable ambivalence to the value of “personal experience” is evident. He acknowledges in passing, however, the emphasis on experience in *bhakti* movements since early times (Halbfass 1988: 378-402). Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in particular stands out as champion of “experience” as a prime virtue of Indian religion and philosophy, as the validating principle in realising the truth of Advaita Vedānta. An interesting study might determine the extent of *bhakti* influence on revisionist Advaita Vedānta.

<sup>86</sup> See King (101) on this feature of revisionist Hindu discourse.

Vedāntic “impersonalism” as much as missionary Christian zeal with the person of Caitanya as Kṛṣṇa incarnate. And if Christian missionaries could accuse Hindus of practicing idolatry, not only was it because they *were* doing so for the most part, but because most Hindus, as much as most Christians, were missing the point of image worship, as they were missing the point of religious practice in general. Finally, if Hindus could be charged with perpetuating an unjust social system that bred cultural stagnation, surely Hindus were to blame for forgetting the deeper spiritual aim behind the system. For these revivalists, as revitalized (universalized and particularized) Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* was the answer to modernity generally, it was also the answer to missionary Christian claims and accusations.<sup>87</sup>

### III.5. CONCLUSION

The emphasis in this chapter has been on discourse, rather than ritual and narrative, as a dimension of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava religion bearing on the practice of image worship. The discursive level, as Roy Rappaport points out, articulates the sacred aspect of the holy, that which can be articulated with language and formulated especially as ultimate sacred postulates. Although reason is appealed to, to formulate and justify practice, as we have seen the discourse resorts largely to revelation and the possession or acquisition of exceptional qualification, and attempts to be systematic to varying degrees. It is in this respect not radically different in argumentation style from that of earlier Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas, even though the differences in circumstances from earlier discourse were arguably radical. Again, as in previous chapters, the aim here has been to show contours more than a detailed, rigorous analysis of arguments or detailed comparison with the thought of other revisionist thinkers.

We have considered nineteenth- and early twentieth-century nascent Caitanya Vaiṣṇava revivalist discourse from both etic and emic perspectives. In etic terms we have seen a complex interplay of responses to modernity, roughly designated as maintenance, renewal and reform. This has helped to deflect over-reification of the two concepts “tradition” and “modernity” and helped us see them as elements of dis-

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<sup>87</sup> Articulation of a specifically missionary type of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava response to western Christian missionising can be found as early as 1896 (Bhaktivedanta’s birthyear) in the Bengal journal *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. See French (82-83) on how Vivekānanda’s “Hindu philosophy” as a missionary approach was seen by Vaiṣṇavas as inadequate, concluding, “If a Christian accepts the Lord Guaraṅga (*sic*) [Caitanya] in preference to Christ, he becomes a convert to Hinduism, or more correctly, to Vaishnavism.”

cursive process. Tradition and modernity prove to be cross-currents in the river of “cumulative tradition” (W. C. Smith 1978: 156-7) that persists in ever-changing configurations.

We also saw, in the emic principle of *śaraṇāgati*, how selection and choice-making in devotional practice were based on the criterion of *hari-sevānukulatā*, accepting what is favourable or in conformity with service to Hari, Kṛṣṇa. While defining clearly the singular and encompassing aim of devotional practice, this principle suggests a recognition within the tradition of the need to constantly reassess the “felicity conditions” under which the truth of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* can be secured. Put another way, the principle suggests the flexibility and adaptability of the *bhakti* logos, the encompassing and integrating order governing the devotionally comprehended world. And we encountered the emic notion of the *sāragrāhī-vaiṣṇava*—the “essence-grasping” Vaiṣṇava adept, or one who makes choices on the basis of a special power to perceive essentials, and hence to spiritually elevate others. Such a person was regarded as an embodiment of successful devotional practice, an instance of the successful “cultivation and embodiment of truth” whose charisma commanded respect from all members of the community. These two (and doubtless others) are ways of viewing how the Caitanyaite tradition and individuals within it reflected on and responded to conditions of profound intellectual and cultural change during the period in question. They could also be viewed as second-order ideas that, as Neville and Wildman put it, “express, cultivate, and regulate [the] conditions of adequacy” of the tradition’s language and practice, as efforts to establish the truth and felicity of first-order religious language and activity (Neville 2001c: 172-73). So, for example, the notion of *śaraṇāgati*, with its emphasis on progressive self-transformation, becomes a way of regulating or framing appropriate understanding of *śrī-mūrti*’s divinity. Or the notion of the *sāragrāhī-vaiṣṇava* could be useful to express what would be considered decisive by practitioners in determining how the tradition moved toward a world mission, bringing Kṛṣṇa to the West ultimately in response to Kṛṣṇa’s divine will. Indeed, for being instrumental in this move, the three persons examined in this chapter have come to be viewed by their present followers as *sāragrāhī-vaiṣṇavas* in their own right, as persons possessing at least an adequacy, indeed an abundance, of *adhikāra* to accomplish this move.

We have also seen that, in marshalling arguments for their Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* case, these three charismatic persons resorted extensively to the texts regarded most sa-

cred by the tradition—the “canon” consisting of *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* flanked by the two supporting texts, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Haribhaktivilāsa*, and increasingly by a third, the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Like their holding to the particularities of Caitanyaite cult, the Caitanyaite’s resorting to these texts might also be deemed a retreat from modernity’s call to reason. Surely these were pre-modern *śāstras* with little or no explicit thematisation of contemporary issues such as caste and idolatry. But what should be apparent from this chapter is that the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas’ acceptance of *śāstra* was not unreflective of contemporary concerns. In this spirit Kedarnath Bhaktivinoda initially argued not for the inerrancy of the BhP, but rather for the need to read with discrimination to discern its deeper significance.<sup>88</sup> Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī stressed the need for selectivity of *smṛti-śāstra* in order to effectively foster devotional practice for a widened franchise. Yet he also saw interpretation of its “subtle purport” as the business of extraordinarily qualified persons, *mahā-bhāgavatas*, who constituted the teaching tradition, the *śikṣā-guru-paramparā*. Bhaktivedānta Swami’s advocacy of qualified *Bhagavad-gītā* interpretation carried the same theme, with an added devotional-heroic element in keeping with the Gītā’s martial context.<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, he was eager to undertake “press and platform propoganda” with support from modernity’s industrial and technological products to expand access to these sacred texts. That these texts would become migratory, translations of them eventually finding homes in foreign lands on a wide scale, was a consequence of the revivalist spirit of these Caitanyaite missionaries, a spirit of engagement with the contemporary world.

Indeed, the revivalist confidence in *śāstra* and the printed word that predominated in these beginnings of worldwide mission generated a paradox that we will see unfold in the next chapter. At least as profound a change in the use of language as handwriting over orality, printing both radically increases the spread of written text

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<sup>88</sup> Bhaktivinoda’s retreat from inerrancy seems to have echoed the Christian missionaries’ retreat from inerrancy of the Bible to a “fulfillment” theology. Ronald Neufeldt notes, “J. N. Farquhar argued that in the figure of the historical Jesus we have a purely spiritual and ethical religion, an object of worship surpassing anything that might be found in *Vedānta*. Scriptures were to be put on a continuum, and the argument was not to be about the inerrancy of scripture but about the adequacy of scriptures in fulfilling human needs” (Neufeldt 1989: 32). This seems to have been Bhaktivinoda’s approach in *The Bhāgavata*. But later (in *Jaiva Dharma*) Bhaktivinoda seemed to return to a more conservative position, insisting on the inerrancy of the BhP

<sup>89</sup> See Ruth Katz (7 and passim) on three features of Arjuna’s character in the *Mahābhārata*, namely the epic hero, the human being, and the religious devotee or hero of religion.

and radically reduces control over the text's reception and interpretation. Handwritten manuscripts of the HBV, or of *Nitya-sevā-mañjarī*, can easily remain within a small brahmin community such as the Rādhāramaṇa temple, wherein written texts are explained and demonstrated to a young priest by his father and his *guru*. Explaining and demonstrating are as much a matter of physical activity—tone of voice (or pauses, silence), facial expression, and gesture—as they are conveyance of words and sentences. If religious truth is a matter of cultivation and embodiment, of imbibing a devotional attitude and employing one's body and senses in *mūrti-sevā* and *harināma* chanting, how might the printed text, and mass communication generally, reshape Kṛṣṇa worship in these new environs? This will be a theme for our attention in the next chapter where we will see how, as Joseph O'Connell put it (speaking of the Caitanya tradition generally), “charismatic-cum-traditional institutions provided a familiar and stable, yet flexible, framework within which to celebrate and perpetuate the enduring charismatic experience of Chaitanya and his entourage in the devotional life of the Vaishnavas collectively” (1999: 217). As we shall see, the spoken and printed words of the charismatic Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) will hold special importance for the Society's members to aid them in making the *unfamiliar* world of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* familiar. And with the spoken and printed word will come the equally unfamiliar image of Kṛṣṇa, as the centre of that world.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Migrant Texts, Migrant Images: Resettling Kṛṣṇa in the West

#### IV.0. INTRODUCTION

The three previous chapters each presented Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship viewed through one of three lenses. The first chapter showed the complex canonical foundation for image worship; the second chapter portrayed key aspects of image worship observable today in a prominent Vrindavan hereditary (“embodied community”) temple; and the third chapter sketched the preliminary intellectual contours preparatory for mission that would make worship of Kṛṣṇa images possible in the modern world beyond India. These chapters help to frame our central picture in this chapter, namely Bhaktivedanta Manor—a particular Kṛṣṇa temple northwest of London, an important place of pilgrimage for Hindus throughout the United Kingdom and ISKCON’s U.K. headquarters. In this chapter I will show how the image of Kṛṣṇa enters into and becomes central to a new calculus of negotiations between ideology and pragmatism in the process of affirming the religious truths of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism in the West. Kṛṣṇa will, in effect, take on new identities to affirm what are considered universal, timeless truths as he leaves Vrindavan to establish many “Vrindavans,” places such as Bhaktivedanta Manor where Kṛṣṇa and his consort Rādhā are worshipped without interruption. In this new calculus an emphasis on *vidhi* prevails over *rāga* to establish and preserve a nascent missionizing institution, and *mūrti-sevā* becomes a locus of embodied truth for a struggling, changing community of worshippers.

In this chapter we continue to look for the varied ways religious truth in relation to worship of images is asserted, expressed, and practiced, as we have in previous chapters. In chapter three I contextualised nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Caitanya Vaiṣṇava discourse on worship within the broader revisionist Hindu discourse as part of India’s dialogue with the West. In that account, India looked westward as it reassessed its own religious traditions, seeking validation and approval in the widened horizon of modernity. Those traditions then began to move westward, both by immigration and by proselytising, to meet the growing Anglo-

American attraction to Indian religion: the West looked to India as a source for cultural renewal.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the early Hinduism-based missionary organisations (one thinks especially of the Theosophical Society and the Vedanta Society) represented a predominantly “quietist,” intellectual or meditative mode of religious engagement with minimal commitment to worship of a specific divinity, the devotional practice offered by Bhaktivedanta Swami, with its emphasis on the quite visible worship of Kṛṣṇa through his name and form, became a special trademark of ISKCON. Asserted and expressed truth were, above all, to manifest in practiced truth, “devotional service” dedicated to the “Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.”

Conversely, the practice of Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* (or, in Rappaport’s terms, living in accordance with the *bhakti* logos) with its focus on embodiment and hence engagement with the physical body and senses, was to bring about confirmation or “realisation” of asserted and expressed truth. While cultivating what might be called a “devotional body,” through regulated, “spiritual” sense experience and physical activity centred on *mūrti-sevā*, “engaging the senses in the service of the Lord of the senses,”<sup>2</sup> the practitioner was to regularly hear and read devotional texts (especially the BhP and CC) and contemplate their meaning.<sup>3</sup> Right practice would be undergirded by right belief, to be imbibed through Bhaktivedanta’s books and lectures,<sup>4</sup> all stressing the authority of the texts he translated as the effective vehicles of tradition and sources of knowledge regarding the “Absolute Truth.” Paradoxically, comprehension of that Absolute Truth entailed at least theoretical acceptance of a sharp distinction between self and body, a teaching common to all schools of Vedānta. Following a celebrated statement attributed to Caitanya (CC 2.20.108) a correlate to the ultimate sacred postulate of Kṛṣṇa’s supremacy was one’s self-identity as a spiritually

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<sup>1</sup> See Clarke 1997: Chs. 4 & 6, and Halbfass 1988: Ch. 5 and *passim*, for overviews of the cultural and intellectual encounter of the West with India.

<sup>2</sup> Here I allude to a verse quoted in CC (2.19.170) from BRS 1.1.12, said to originate from “*Nārada-pañcarātra*,” defining *bhakti* in terms of devotional activity: *hr̥ṣīkeṇa hr̥ṣīkeśa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate*. This was often cited by Prabhupāda.

<sup>3</sup> The development of a “devotional body” (Holdrege 1998) involved distinctive changes in physical appearance as well as lifestyle. We discussed some elements of lifestyle change emphasised by Bhaktivedanta Swami in the previous chapter. In ISKCON, he would also insist that his disciples wear distinctively Indian traditional dress—*dhotī* and *kurta* for men, *sārī* for women—and that men keep shaven-headed with hair tuft (*śikhā*). The distinctive *ūrdhva-puṇḍra-tilaka* markings (vertical parallel lines of special clay on the forehead and upper body) worn by members of the Gauḍīya Maṭha should also be worn at all times.

<sup>4</sup> Most of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s lectures were recorded on audio tape and are presently available on audio cassette and MP3-CD from Bhaktivedanta Archives. Approximately two thousand lectures are available.

embodied eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa; and a correlate of this truth was the negative identification of self with one's temporal body. Devotional practice with the temporal body, senses and mind, should gradually bring about transformation leading to acquisition of one's non-temporal "body" fit for eternal Kṛṣṇa-sevā. And *mūrti-sevā* (service to the *embodied* Absolute Truth) was to be an important means to accomplish this. This paradox of embodiment is one way of explaining why, in the shift from an "embodied community" centred on identity based on birth (such as the Rādhāramaṇa community) to a "missionizing tradition" centred on right practice and right belief, ISKCON would become a "missionizing-yet-partially-embodied community," as Barbara Holdrege has observed (2003: 123-25). The "partial embodiment" consisted of the simultaneous concern for right practice (right bodily conduct) and the absolute denial of identity with the temporal body.

Indeed this paradox of embodiment/disembodiment may also help to illuminate our ongoing theme of understanding the varied relations between texts and images in the practice of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*. Emphasis on practice in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism was long coupled with emphasis on experience informed by texts that variously grappled with the problem of embodiment and the notion of spiritual embodiment. And as we have seen in chapter three, the modern appeal to experience was blended with the pre-modern appeal to authority—especially textual authority—in missionary Vaiṣṇavism. As I have been attempting to explore the varied relations of texts to images throughout this work, the same theme continues here. How it is that texts shape the practices of worship, how worship needs shape texts, and how a worship community struggles to unfold and sustain itself in a context radically different from that which produced its foundational texts (BhP, CC, HBV)—these are some issues to be examined here. The foundational texts become "migratory," with translations of them by Bhaktivedanta Swami, regarded as authoritative, functioning both as ideological escorts to Kṛṣṇa as *mūrti* and *nāma* and as vehicles for mission.<sup>5</sup> They provide a conduit of revelatory, canonical authority linked closely to and interrelated with the charismatic authority of their (initially) sole teacher, Bhaktivedanta Swami (honoured affectionately by his followers as "Prabhupāda," henceforth referred to as such). These texts, as expressions of the truth of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, become the epistemic

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<sup>5</sup> I am borrowing the expression "migratory" in relation to texts and writing from Laurie Patton, who cites Leela Gandhi (Patton: 807-808), though this is a rather different usage from both. Still, the result may be similar in bringing about cultural hybridity.

foundation for the “Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement,” giving the propositional dimension of truth special weighting in the face of perceived multiple Western ideological opposition while also functioning as the basis for realising truth as cultivation through the practice of *bhakti sādhana*.

That these texts are now read in western countries has become possible, as I have argued in the previous chapter, because of deliberate reformative interpretation of them begun in the nineteenth century and continuing in the twentieth. The sorts of arguments we encountered there made it possible and *plausible* for these texts to become blueprints for worship practices in Western Kṛṣṇa temples and practitioners’ homes.<sup>6</sup> As such, they have served to assert the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa as ultimate object of worship; but also they have asserted the legitimacy for anyone, duly trained and initiated, to perform such worship—not only in the privacy of one’s home, but as a priest in a public temple.

Arguing for Kṛṣṇa’s supremacy meant, from the perspective of Vedantic metaphysics, insistence on the ultimately personal nature of Brahman. In Rappaport’s terms, this is the pivotal ultimate sacred postulate that sustains Kṛṣṇa worship in the West ideologically, in contrast to the equally pivotal ultimate sacred postulate of non-personalist Advaita Vedantic Brahman that infuses others, such as the Rama-krishna Mission/Vedānta Society under Swami Vivekananda’s leadership, with the ideological foundation for spreading their messages. As one might expect, this ideological difference manifests visually. Generally in contrast to missionary Advaitic Hinduism, missionary Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism is conspicuous by its use of images—not only the *śrī-mūrti* temple images or worshipable images in homes, but all kinds of graphic images, including painted images and photographs.

As we saw in the previous chapter, despite this ideological difference we saw a level of agreement between the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* and other prominent revisionists which could be located on the second level of Rappaport’s ritual structure scheme. Thus all agreed that the ancient Indian cosmological axiom of social hierarchical structure (*varṇāśrama*) was to be upheld by an ethical (i.e. qualitative), rather than a genealogical, interpretation.

To suggest one way of interpreting these parallels and diversions, in chapter three we briefly explored the twofold way of conceiving modernity offered by Brian

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<sup>6</sup> See Neville and Wildman (2001c: 190) on changing “plausibility conditions” for religious ideas.

Hatcher, namely the universalist and the particularist stances. In their common drive to embrace modernity insofar as it meant acknowledgement of universally applicable principles, both Vaiṣṇavas and other revisionists took up universalist rhetoric excavated from their respective traditions linked more or less to Vedantic speculation. As for particularism, the Vaiṣṇavas could be said to find it in the particularity of person and place—of Kṛṣṇa and his abode, Vrindavan; likewise historical particularity could be claimed in celebrating Caitanya and his provenance in the early sixteenth century. As we shall see in this chapter, another sort of tension between the universal and the particular will appear in an issue of practice standardisation (the level of *specific rules*, in Rappaport’s hierarchy of liturgical order): Should the many “Vrindavans” all have the exact same ways of worshipping the many forms of the one universal Kṛṣṇa?

Comparisons of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava missionizing thought with other revisionist Hindu thought are peripheral to our main objects of comparison, which are specifically located and ongoing functioning temples—Rādhāramaṇa in Vrindavan and Bhaktivedanta Manor north of London. We are considering Rādhāramaṇa as an example of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava “embodied community,” and Bhaktivedanta Manor as an example of a “missionizing-yet-partially-embodied tradition.” Keeping image worship as our focal point of comparison, we will see how ideas of religious truth are expressed and cultivated in each context. Since the epistemological truth for both is understood to be the same, it becomes interesting to see how the other two types of religious truth might vary.

In both the previously examined (Rādhāramaṇa) and present (ISKCON/Bhaktivedanta Manor) cases, we see concrete situations of worship and living that are variations on each other. I will suggest that the difference is one of emphasis: cultivated truth in Rādhāramaṇa temple places *vidhi* as a support of *rāga*, whereas in Bhaktivedanta Manor there is effort to find ways to bring *rāga* into the enhancement of *vidhi*.

In this chapter I will first sketch the early growth of ISKCON, focusing on temples and temple worship to highlight themes of charisma, conquest and routinization. Second, I will concentrate on the beginnings, growing pains, and identity struggles of Bhaktivedanta Manor, concluding this section with an analysis of the temple images’ distinctive visual theology. In the third section I will consider how the Manor maps onto the *vidhi/rāga* coordinates in comparison to Rādhāramaṇa temple,

and see how this affects a particular controversy recently arising in the Manor over iconographic “alterations.” Finally I will view Bhaktivedanta Manor as a place of pilgrimage, the hope for personal integration, to consider how it expands the devotional understanding of the sacred land of Vrindavan.

## IV.I. KṚṢṆA IN MLECCHA-DEŚA: FROM THE ULTIMATE SAN FRANCISCO HIPPIE TO THE ULTIMATE ENGLISH COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

### IV.I.1. “Kṛṣṇa is All-Attractive”: A Devotional Empire Expands

I shall begin this chapter with a brief account of Kṛṣṇa’s Western migration (or replication) through the establishment and spread of ISKCON, Prabhupāda’s acronym for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. ISKCON’s brief history has been documented extensively, but its temple worship ritual locus—both in its conceptualisations and its practice—has been treated only tangentially to other concerns.<sup>7</sup>

The early phase of ISKCON’s history was dominated by the charismatic presence of Prabhupāda as a personable yet bold preacher of Kṛṣṇa bhakti.<sup>8</sup> In his pres-

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<sup>7</sup> For a thorough overview and assessment of scholarship on ISKCON from the early 1970s through 2001, see (forthcoming) the late Tamal Krishna Goswami’s “High Krishnology: Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda’s contribution to the theology of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism” (exact title not yet fixed). Goswami discusses three phases of scholarship on ISKCON: “counterculture discourse,” “cult controversy discourse,” and the “discourse of indifference.” In relation to the first category, Goswami discusses Prabhupāda’s efforts to distance ISKCON from the hippie movement image it soon acquired in America. Similarly in relation to the cult controversy of the mid-1970s through the 1980s Goswami discusses Prabhupāda’s and ISKCON’s efforts to be distanced from the cult-stigma. On the “discourse of indifference” Goswami documents scholars’ persistent failure (also characteristic of the first two periods) to seriously consider the theological underpinnings of ISKCON, their interests being primarily sociological. For further bibliography of academic studies on ISKCON see Ketola (4-7, and Sources and Literature).

The “authorized” biography of Prabhupāda (commissioned by ISKCON’s Governing Body Commission in 1978) is Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami’s *Śrīla Prabhupāda Lilāmṛta*, which focuses mainly on the final period of his life, the twelve years of his active Western missionary work from his Boston arrival in 1965 to his demise in 1977. Other works by various followers, focusing both on Prabhupāda and on early ISKCON history include Hari Śauri Dāsa, *A Transcendental Diary* (four volumes); Hayagriva Das (Howard Wheeler), *The Hare Krishna Explosion and Vrindavan Days: Memoirs of an Indian Holy Town*; and several others.

<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of Prabhupāda’s charisma in terms of Joachim Wach’s categories, see Goswami (1998: 247-66). For an in-depth analysis combining charisma with cognition theory, see Ketola. See also Selengut, who argues that “psychological or cultural needs alone do not create charismatic leaders.” See Scharf and Rosen for a consideration of cultural-

ence, life for his followers was marked by novelty, simplicity and a measure of spontaneity. It was a time of heady expansion for the movement as the number of young followers multiplied rapidly. Prabhupāda's every word and deed were seen by his followers as enactments of victorious conquest; indeed they regarded him as a general leading his troops to destroy the "spell of maya" with the devotional practices of "Krishna consciousness," especially the chanting of *harināma*. Doubtless Prabhupāda was a charismatic figure for his followers, regarded as being "at the boundary of the human and the superhuman dimensions of existence" (Ketola: 181), but those young people who joined his mission in the mid-1960's to mid-1970's in America and Europe saw him especially as an approachable embodiment of sacred tradition.<sup>9</sup> His ability to impute Kṛṣṇa-centred living as an all-encompassing worldview to his followers was, he claimed, arising from his faithfulness to the teachings of his own guru. These teachings, in turn, were drawn from the texts Prabhupāda had translated—texts that had been compiled, preserved, and handed down through disciplic succession. In short, Prabhupāda was to a large extent, and might have considered himself, (following Max Weber's typology) an *institutional* charismatic figure.<sup>10</sup> As he said repeatedly of himself, he was a *representative* of his own guru and hence, by the principle of disciplic succession, a "representative of Kṛṣṇa."<sup>11</sup> In that sense, his qualification was to be seen as attainable by others. As he said of himself, "Yes, . . . I strictly follow the instruction of my Guru Mahārāja, that's all. Otherwise I have no strength. I have not played any magic" (750203mw.haw).

And so, from the beginning, Prabhupāda intended to share his charisma: Kṛṣṇa, as the all-attractive "Supreme Personality of Godhead" should be the central object

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historical timing and the growth of ISKCON. For an analysis of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava conceptions and practices of the guru in terms of charisma, see Broo (2003a).

<sup>9</sup> For an illuminating view on "embodiment of tradition" see Welbon, who illustrates how a person in India is accepted by his community as a competent interpreter of tradition for the present moment by showing an ability to apply a wide range of traditional knowledge to the unprecedented circumstances of the present. Many of his observations could be applied to Prabhupāda.

<sup>10</sup> In Weber's typology, the *priest* represented institutional charisma, in opposition to the *magician*, who possessed personal charisma. Between the two were, in his scheme, two sorts of *prophets*. (Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* 1965 [1922]: 2, 3, 28-30, 46-48. Cited in Ketola 25-26).

<sup>11</sup> Prabhupāda repeatedly emphasized that a "bona fide spiritual master" is a "representative of Kṛṣṇa" who strictly follows the instructions of his guru. The expression "bona fide spiritual master" appears 1079 times in a computer search of his collected writings and recorded lectures and conversations, the Bhaktivedanta Vedabase. Similarly the phrase "representative of Kṛṣṇa" appears 232 times. The two expressions are often conjoined. See, for example, his Purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.41.

of attention and devotion, and Prabhupāda should be seen by his followers as Kṛṣṇa's confidential servant. Moreover, Kṛṣṇa was to be the centre of attention and devotion for *communities* of devotees, not merely for loose collections of individual spiritual seekers.

As we saw in the previous chapter, while still in India Prabhupāda viewed temple establishment as integral to his mission. Soon after arriving in America he sought means to acquire a property convertible for use as a Kṛṣṇa temple, even before any of his sympathisers could be called serious followers, what to speak of dedicated disciples or temple priests. Even as “New Jagannātha Purī,” a rented storefront amidst hippiedom's Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, became the first ISKCON “temple” in early 1967 (as the hippie movement came to its height), Prabhupāda's new initiates had only begun to learn the basics of their new-found spiritual path.<sup>12</sup> Yet Prabhupāda wasted no time leading these young hippies-turned-devotees in the performance of a rudimentary consecration ceremony for Jagannātha, Baladeva and Subhadrā, the exotic painted wooden likenesses in smaller format of the same images in Purī, India.<sup>13</sup> Within the next two years there would be more “temples” in other cities including Los Angeles, Boston, and Montreal, where no sooner would properties be secured (initially rented) than Prabhupāda would consecrate worshipable *mūrtis*.<sup>14</sup>

Like devotional life generally for ISKCON members, temple worship in these early days was simple, yet it appealed both to a sense of the exotic and the mysteri-

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<sup>12</sup> Naming temples after some holy place in India, as “New-” Such-and-such, echoed British colonial practice. We may note the element of reversed colonialism in early ISKCON, not without basis in Prabhupāda's early sympathies with the Indian independence movement.

Although ISKCON's first headquarters was in New York, the San Francisco centre became the first temple proper with the consecration of the Jagannatha murtis.

See Judah for a pioneer, and still classic, study of ISKCON in relation to the American ‘counterculture’.

<sup>13</sup> The choice of these forms was serendipitous. When Malati Dasi showed Prabhupāda a small wooden figure she had acquired from an imports shop, Prabhupāda recognised it as a miniature of Jagannatha, taking this as an indication of Kṛṣṇa's desire to be worshipped in this form by the San Francisco fledgling devotees. On Prabhupāda's request Malati's husband Syamasundara soon set to work carving 90 cm. tall *mūrtis* of the three forms, completing them in time for Caitanya's appearance day celebration (Satsvarupa 1981: 92-93).

<sup>14</sup> By 1973 there were sixty-eight centres listed in *Back To Godhead* magazine (58:2, cited in Judah, 42), including twenty-eight in the U.S. and the remainder in fourteen other countries. Of these, perhaps one-fourth of the centres maintained regular temple worship of *mūrtis*, the remainder having an altar with paintings, posters, and photographs. At present there are approximately 400 centres worldwide, listed in publications. Out of these, I would estimate at least half maintain regular *mūrti-seva*, in a wide range of elaborateness.

ous. Especially this was so in San Francisco where the primitive-looking Jagannātha figures seemed attuned to hippie flamboyance, itself a reaction to American middle-class values centred on rationalism and individualist industry and consumerism. Prabhupāda initially encouraged participation with little or no regard for qualification, inviting temple guests to bring simple offerings for Kṛṣṇa, who would surely accept them on the strength of Prabhupāda's will as Kṛṣṇa's representative (S. D. Goswami vol. I. 2002: 646).

The presence of Kṛṣṇa in his permanently established worshipable *mūrti* should enhance the creeper of devotion (*bhakti-latā*) Prabhupāda hoped to foster in the hearts of his disciples through the daily practice of *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti*, the rules of which centre largely on such worship.<sup>15</sup> Devotion should also be enhanced by frequent observance of festivals focused on Kṛṣṇa in the temples, to enliven both committed devotees and casual visitors. Prabhupāda advised his Los Angeles temple manager Tamal Krishna Goswami how to stage such events:

[Prabhupāda] would send me, practically every week, [guidelines for] a special festival to celebrate in the temple, for the Sunday Feast program. Every week there was a different festival. One week it was churning butter . . . Jayānanda got these big five-kilo jugs, and we would fill them with milk, and we had these sticks, and everybody in the temple was churning butter, and then we offered it to the deities [the temple's presiding *mūrtis* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa] and ate some of it, threw some of it—Prabhupāda gave us a description of how to perform the festival (T. K. Goswami, lecture, 17-02-02).<sup>16</sup>

Playful enactments such as this, recalling Kṛṣṇa's naughty childhood butter thievery, should convey a sense of immediacy and substantiality to Kṛṣṇa's pastimes described in the BhP, even while the strict rules for regular worship should instill devotees with the sense of Kṛṣṇa's supremacy. There should prevail a sense of Kṛṣṇa's presence, whereby everything, including one's own body, was to be seen as Kṛṣṇa's property and hence to be "used in Kṛṣṇa's service." In short, worship of the temple Kṛṣṇa image was to be a "practical application" of Kṛṣṇa's *Bhagavad-gītā* in-

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<sup>15</sup> See Prabhupāda's conversation with poet Allen Ginsberg (690512rc.col) on this topic. Ginsberg suggested Prabhupāda simplify and reduce regulations, and to generally de-Indianize his message for the sake of attracting a wider clientele, to fulfill America's need for "a large single unifying religious movement." Prabhupāda replied that his intention was to increase regulations, so that his followers would be constantly occupied with service to Kṛṣṇa who, being "all-attractive," was the fitting divinity to bring about religious unity.

<sup>16</sup> I quote this from my article, "A Tremendous Connection" (2003).

junction to think of him and worship him always.<sup>17</sup> By such practice, all the truths of “Kṛṣṇa consciousness” would become easily accessible, as faith in the reality of the *mūrti*’s divinity would grow. In Rappaport’s terms, we might say that the five features of divinity (see chapter three, Introduction) could be expected to become apparent in the *mūrti* by the devotees dedicating themselves to *arcanam* practice.

By 1968 Prabhupāda felt it was time to make the next big step he had so much anticipated in India, namely bestowing full brahmanical status to western Vaiṣṇavas by *pāñcarātrika-dīkṣā*. Thus he granted some of his disciples “second initiation,” or “brahmin initiation,” into the chanting of the Vedic Gayatrī-mantra and six additional mantras associated with *pāñcarātric* temple worship that he had received from his own guru.<sup>18</sup> Tamal Krishna Goswami observed,

Although Prabhupāda had given San Francisco the name New Jagannātha Purī, the standard of worship offered to Lord Jagannātha there was still very meager. The deities stood bare, without dresses, their colorful painted forms completely exposed. Neither was there any bathing ceremony nor the other normal items of worship. Prabhupāda knew that it would not be possible to immediately introduce the complicated system of *pūjā* followed in the strict Vaiṣṇava temples in India—it was all his American disciples could do to make a few offerings of *dhūpa* [incense] and *bhoga* [food] and to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa—but he had every intention of elevating his disciples to the proper platform. With this in mind, while on the East Coast he had offered some of the senior devotees second initiation, because it was through this second birth that the third birth, called *yājñika-janma*, would be attained, and one would be able to worship Lord Viṣṇu properly. (T. K. Goswami 1984: 56).

“Proper” worship would entail the beginnings of ritual structuring (Rappaport’s “liturgical order”) commonly observable in Indian temples such as Rādhāramaṇa in Vrindavan. The days of casual Kṛṣṇa worship would be short-lived. In 1969 Prabhupāda would introduce a strict and comprehensive standard of worship in his Los Angeles temple, with a daily regimen of services for Kṛṣṇa beginning at four o’clock in the morning and ending at nine o’clock at night.<sup>19</sup> In a spirit of standardi-

<sup>17</sup> Letter to Lilasakti, 74-11-03, in which Prabhupāda quotes Bg. 9.34.

<sup>18</sup> See Broo 2003a: 162-64 on first and second initiations in ISKCON; see also Prabhupāda conversations: 680509in.bos and 730813rc.par. As one might expect, the initiation rites were performed in a manner much simpler than the elaborate rites described in HBV. However, unlike what I have seen at a Rādhāramaṇa initiation, a small *homa* (fire oblation) was performed to sanctify the event. This is now standard practice in ISKCON, as in Gauḍiya Mathas.

<sup>19</sup> The schedule was similar to that of the current Los Angeles temple: The images are “awakened” at 4:00; 4:30 - Maṅgala Ārati; morning worship, including bathing of the images until 7:00; 7:00 Darśana Ārati; 12:00 - Rāj Bhoga Ārati; 16:30 - Ārati; 18:30 - Sundara

sation underscoring Kṛṣṇa-universalism, Los Angeles was to become the model for other temples in America and beyond. Soon the competitive spirit of Prabhupāda's temple managers would lead to the rapid proliferation of *mūrtis* and worship programs to match or surpass the Los Angeles temple in grandeur and opulence, reflecting growing economic success through zealous street sales of Prabhupāda's books and an incense business.

Initially, as might typically be done by gurus in the Rādhāramaṇa community or in his own guru's institutions, the Gauḍīya Maṭhas, Prabhupāda would give personal instruction on the details of *arcanam* to a few individual disciples stationed at his various temples, or he would answer by letter their questions regarding worship. Whatever was then passed on by word of mouth as being what "Prabhupāda said" to do or to not do became unquestioned law, understood to be Kṛṣṇa's will expressed through his representative.<sup>20</sup>

The *arcanam* details centred on two principles of self-discipline—cleanliness and punctuality. Prabhupāda wrote to his Chicago temple president,

I am glad to hear that you are taking up the program of deity worship very seriously. This is required. So everything should be first class as you have got full facility, just to the standard of Los Angeles. In Los Angeles I personally advised them in all the different aspects of deity worship, so you may consult, especially with Silavati Prabhu and do the needful. One thing though, the deity worship must be completely pure in terms of cleanliness and punctuality, otherwise there will be some offense (Letter to Sri Govinda, 73-01-31).

While "deity worship" performed with "first class" arrangements would provide a promising opportunity to make spiritual progress, it also carried potential dangers of committing offense to Kṛṣṇa (*sevā-aparādha*) if performed neglectfully. Strictness would be required to avoid the pitfalls of failure in devotional practice (the opposite of the result intended in the cultivation of truth) or, as Neville and Wildman might put it, to sustain the felicity conditions for the truth of practice to prevail, devotees would have to be vigilant in these two areas of personal behaviour.

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Ārati; 20:00 – Śayana Ārati; images are "put to rest" by 21:00. Seven food offerings are made in the course of the day, prior to each *ārati*, plus one breakfast offering at 8:00 o'clock.

<sup>20</sup> The degree of absoluteness in Prabhupāda's authority within ISKCON would not have been essentially different from that of gurus in the Gauḍīya Maṭhas. Yet as ISKCON expanded, personal contact with him for most of his disciples became minimal, lending increasing authority to whatever verbal statements (rightly or wrongly) were attributed to him and to his statements in letters regarding *arcanam*.

In his discussion of ritual's general characteristics, Rappaport lists *invariance* as a crucial feature for the sustaining of ritual practice (the temporal dimension of the liturgical order) (Rappaport: 36-37). In chapter one we encountered the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava scriptural nexus of ritual invariance in the HBV; and in the previous chapter we saw a modern concern to renew this text's authority among Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. Though the HBV per se has as yet not been used in ISKCON, since 1969 institutionalisation brought further efforts at standardisation, involving the learning of additional rituals detailed in worship manuals derived indirectly from the HBV.

Initially the *Nectar of Devotion* would become the basic textual guide for the worship of "Rukminī-Dvāṛakādhīśa" in Los Angeles and other ISKCON temples. As Prabhupāda's English summary of Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*, *Nectar of Devotion* provided the theoretical basis for the practice of *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti* and included Rūpa's HBV-related list of sixty-four principles and activities constituting the practice (as well as a list of sixty-one offensive actions and attitudes to be avoided). More than half the items constituting *vaidhī-sādhana* pertain directly to *mūrti-sevā*, which *pūjārīs* would initially learn to perform through the grapevine of devotees instructed directly by Prabhupāda, as mentioned above. But *Nectar of Devotion* was only the beginning of written liturgy for ISKCON temples.

In 1974 Prabhupāda issued to his several centres, as mimeographed copies, the first of two manuals for temple worship—a section of his as yet unpublished *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, translated and including his "purports."<sup>21</sup> This section, extracted from a series of verses describing instructions by Caitanya to Sanātana Gosvāmī, included details about *mūrti-sevā*. A list of an additional sixty-four service items compiled from the *Haribhaktivilāsa* (HBV 11.127-140) constituted his commentary to some of the CC verses.<sup>22</sup> Introducing this list, he wrote,

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<sup>21</sup> In 1976 Prabhupāda commissioned ISKCON's *Arcana-paddhati*, a yet further detailed manual for *mūrti-sevā* translated from Bengali (from a Gauḍīya Maṭha manual) and edited for Western use. This ninety-eight-page spiral bound manual (with plastic covers) contained, in addition to considerable explanation of rather technical procedures based on HBV, several Sanskrit verses and *mantras* to be uttered at appropriate times in the daily worship of Kṛṣṇa images. That work has since been replaced by another, considerably longer work, *Pañcarātra-pradīpa*, commissioned by ISKCON's Governing Body Commission in the early 1990's. This author was the "group coordinator" for the compilation of this handbook. (See Deity Worship Research Group 1995).

<sup>22</sup> This purport, like many of his CC purports, is a translation of Bhaktisiddhānta's CC commentary to the same verses. This list of *upacāras* is not to be confused with the list of sixty-four principles and practices of *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti* mentioned above. The latter list considerably overlaps the former, with greater detail specific to *arcanam*.

In the temple, worship should be so gorgeous that all sixty-four items should be available for the satisfaction of the Personality of Godhead. Sometimes it is impossible to get all sixty-four items; therefore we recommend that at least on the first day of installation all sixty-four items should be available. When the Lord is established, worship with all sixty-four items should continue as far as possible. (CC 2.24.334 purport)

“Gorgeous” worship would indeed become the norm throughout ISKCON. The emphasis on “opulence” underscored the rule-governed mode of worship Prabhupāda considered appropriate for his disciples. In a 1970 letter to a senior woman disciple, Yamunā Dāsī, Prabhupāda explained,

In our Temples the Deities, Radha and Krishna are worshipped as Laksmi-Narayana with all the opulences of Their Majestic Lordship in Dvaraka. The worship of Radha-Krishna as They appear in Vrindavana is a very advanced stage, so we worship Them in the Temples as Laksmi-Narayana. Actually there is no difference because Laksmi-Narayana is directly the expansion of Radha-Krishna. We are following the prescribed method of Temple worship as it is the effective program for developing the highest perfection of pure love of Krishna. (Letter to Yamuna, 70-01-16)

The link between following prescribed method (*vaidhī-bhakti*) and majestic opulence would, in effect, call forth a double identity for the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *mūrtis* in ISKCON temples. We recall that Rādhāramaṇa of Vrindavan carries a multiple identity for his votaries, one of his aspects being his association with the Śālagrāma stone (in turn associated with the majestic Nārāyaṇa form of the divinity) from which he is believed to have appeared. In the case of ISKCON Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *mūrtis*, Prabhupāda accentuated their homonymity with Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa to assert a twofold purpose. They should appear iconographically with Kṛṣṇa’s and Rādhā’s unique attractive features as the dancing, two-handed, flute-playing cowherd and his charming consort; and they were to be worshipped “as Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa,” the appropriate recipients of service governed by textual rules.<sup>23</sup> Clearly there was to be a greater emphasis on *vidhī* than prevails in Rādhāramaṇa or other Vrindavan temples. But ISKCON devotees were to see “no difference” between forms seen and forms worshipped, since worship in the prescriptive mode was felicitous for gaining “the highest perfection of pure love of Krishna.” We might adduce a third, implicit purpose in identifying Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa with Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa: The emphasis on majestic lordship accorded well with the ethos of missionary expansion. Royal motifs suggest martial power and

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<sup>23</sup> This was a *reversal* of Pāñcarātric tradition, wherein Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu was sometimes worshipped as Kṛṣṇa (Hudson 2002: 21-22).

influence. As we shall see, the same connotations will apply to the Jagannātha *mūrtis* in ISKCON's Rathayātrā processions.

#### IV.1.2. *Kṛṣṇa on the Road*

As a mission, ISKCON has been strongly oriented toward expansion, and Kṛṣṇa as *mūrti* has participated in such activity, especially through his *darśana* and *prasāda*, generally accessed in his temples. While establishing temples has been one way to, in effect, claim territory, another way has been to accompany the image of Kṛṣṇa on procession—an ancient Indian mode of territorial assertion and claim to sovereignty.<sup>24</sup> In the West this would occur in novel ways, such as the “Road Show,” eventually to become the “Rādhā-Dāmodara Party.” Encouraged by Prabhupāda, starting in 1971 devotees transformed an old bus into a temple on wheels. Rādhā-Dāmodara became the main attraction of a road show devotees staged in cities across the southern United States, wherever they could find venues (mainly colleges and clubs).<sup>25</sup> Receiving worship in similar fashion to regular temple *mūrtis*, Rādhā-Dāmodara would be positioned prominently on the stage of each show, consisting of *kīrtana*, a drama, a talk on Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and *prasāda* distribution—all designed to attract young people and recruit members.<sup>26</sup> One eyewitness account gives us the picture:

The show was beautiful. Radha-Damodara were on Their altar, with Silavati taking care of Them. The buses were immaculate. They were hand-painted white, with purple detail and purple *mahā-mantra* painted on them. The Road Show went everywhere with the Deities to preach to people and get them to join the movement. It was very powerful. (Murti dasa, quoted in Adhikari: 485).

Another recollection, in free verse, tells of adventuresome times filled with devotional encounters with Rādhā-Dāmodara.

*Everyone wants to remember the old days—  
“When and where did you first see Rādhā-Dāmodara?”  
Gour Hari came out of Macy's, 34<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan,*

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<sup>24</sup> Davis (1997: 19-20 53-54); it is also very much a contemporary mode of territorial assertion and expression of temple influence (Mines: 67).

<sup>25</sup> Rādhā-Damodara are twenty-four-inch metal *mūrtis* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa originally intended to preside in the ISKCON Washington D.C. temple. They are now worshipped in Gita Nagari, an ISKCON rural temple community in western Pennsylvania.

<sup>26</sup> See Vaiyasaki Dasa Adhikari's account of this, chs. 7-19.

and there They were on the sidewalk with Their men.  
 Puṣpavān first saw Them in Philly downtown,  
 where suddenly it rained and Their servants  
 picked Them up and ran into the subway.  
 Viṣṇujana Swami sliding in his socks  
 the full length of the Baltimore temple floor,  
 singing, “Jaya Rādhā-Dāmodara, Jaya Rādhā-Dāmodara,”  
 and singing it amplified on dozens of college campuses,  
 magnetic performances drawing thousands to darśanas . . .  
 (S. D. Goswami 1984: 103-104).

By 1975 the troupe had expanded from one bus to a group of six buses traveling throughout the U.S., with some seventy-five young unmarried men (*brahmacārīs*) (T. K. Goswami 1984: 390-93, 548-50). In addition to Rādhā-Dāmodara (presiding in one bus), each additional bus housed its own *mūrtis*, of Caitanya and Nityānanda (“Gaura-Nitai”). No longer staging a road show, the bus parties concentrated on distributing Prabhupāda’s books, competing with temples to please Prabhupāda with ever-increasing numbers—tens of thousands sold weekly. Prabhupāda coached his platoons of *brahmacārī* preachers by letter, reminding them how to keep spiritually fit, just as if they would be living at one of the stationary temples:

This traveling SKP [*sankīrtana* party] in buses carrying tents is very encouraging. It should be continued all over the country. One thing is that all the students on the party must strictly follow the rules and regulations. Cleanliness is most essential, rising early, taking bath, etc. It is not that because we are traveling that we can neglect our routine work and become irregular in our habits. No, we must make every effort to remain regulated and clean. This is the solid basis for our work. When our routine work, like chanting, reading books, nice arati, Deity worship, etc., is very nice, then our preaching will have effect. That is the secret (Letter to Kīrtanānanda, 71-12-12, quoted in Adhikari: 451-52]).

The other, more traditional way of accompanying *mūrtis* on procession would be Jagannātha Rathayātrā. In chapter one I discussed the significance of this event for Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. Prabhupāda, as a child, had organized a small-scale facsimile Jagannātha Rathayātrā in his Calcutta home neighborhood. He was therefore eager to institute similar events in the West. Following Prabhupāda’s directions, the San Francisco devotees would be the first to take the Jagannātha *mūrtis* on procession, an exuberant “Rathayātrā” recollective of the massive annual event in Purī (S. D. Goswami, vol. I 2002: 699-702; Hayagriva Dasa 1985: 199-208). Soon Jagannātha

Rathayātrā would be staged in other American cities, and eventually in other countries.

However modest in size these events were compared to the Purī prototype, and however slight their effect on the public, for Prabhupāda and his followers each Rathayātrā marked a victory for the spread of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* and hence a step toward individual and collective freedom from the “unhappy state of materialism” characteristic of contemporary life (Prabhupāda, BhP 6.10.9 purport).<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Prabhupāda’s constant travel, preaching, and founding of Kṛṣṇa temples recalls the *digvijaya* expeditions of Indian kings, the “conquest of the quarters” that missionising ascetics later adopted. Not unlike Indian prototypes (Sax: 39-40), Prabhupāda combined the two themes of asceticism and royalty, himself acting as the chief wandering ascetic wielding quasi-martial power as vice-regent for a special “monarch,” namely Kṛṣṇa in his manifestations as divine name and *sri-mūrti*.

For Prabhupāda, one such event in particular would be a considerable triumph—the parade of Jagannātha, Subhadrā and Baladeva (in three large *rathas*, or chariots) from Marble Arch to Trafalgar Square in London, in July 1973.<sup>28</sup> As mentioned in the beginning of this study, what had once been the source of the English word *juggernaut*, symbolising what was unstoppable and associated eventually with the worldwide advance of modernity, had now come in the very midst of bygone imperial power to haunt it with the persistent traditionalism of religious India (D. Smith 2003: 21-26).

This event and the subsequent consecration of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa images “Rādhā-Gokulānanda” at Bhaktivedanta Manor that same summer marked highpoints in Prabhupāda’s worldwide *digvijaya*. Although but one of several Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temples he would establish, Bhaktivedanta Manor would henceforth stand out as a special trophy symbolising the success of his mission. Significantly, the Manor was situated near London. It was only fitting that the “Supreme Personality of Godhead” reside in

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<sup>27</sup> Vrindavan is not a prototype for Jagannātha Rathayātrā (there being but one very small Jagannātha temple there), and generally not for *mūrti* processions, though one large Rāganātha temple, of the Rāmānandī Sampradāya, holds an annual *mūrti* procession.

<sup>28</sup> This author was present on this occasion. Remarkable was Prabhupāda’s energetic and emotion-filled participation, as he danced, with arms raised and tears flowing, before the carts throughout the procession. During other Rathayātrās he usually contented himself to ride on Subhadrā’s cart. See S. D. Goswami, vol. II (2002: 159-62) for several devotee eyewitness accounts of this particular occasion.

a temple near the capital city of the once worldwide British Empire.<sup>29</sup> As we turn our attention to Kṛṣṇa worship at Bhaktivedanta Manor, we see a microcosm of ISKCON's development of routinization, such that much of what I describe here is applicable more or less to other ISKCON temples in other parts of the world. Naturally some features described are unique to the Manor.

## IV.2. KRṢṆA IN BHAKTIVEDANTA MANOR

### IV.2.1. Rādhā-Gokulānanda's Consecration in British Suburbia

In chapter two, various considerations determined my selection of the Rādhāramaṇa temple for special attention from among several possible Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Kṛṣṇa temples in Vrindavan. For the choice of Bhaktivedanta Manor to focus on in this chapter I had mainly three considerations. First was this temple's prominence both among ISKCON temples and within the greater landscape of Hindu temples in the U.K. Second, its well-documented history (centred on a protracted legal battle over zoning with the local village, Letchmore Heath), holds significance for our central topic of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship moving West.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the temple's proximity to Oxford made occasional visits and interviewing of community members possible.

The Manor's ISKCON connection began with the 1969 meeting of two charismatic personages from two disparate cultural worlds—George Harrison, the pop idol of *The Beatles* fame, and Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, an elderly Indian and spiritual leader for the small but growing number of “Hare Krishna” devotees.<sup>31</sup> More than the rest of his celebrity musician colleagues, Harrison appreciated Prabhupāda and his Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* message, enough to purchase and donate outright

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<sup>29</sup> Also since 1969 Rādhā-Londonīśvara (“Rādhā and the Lord of London,” so named by Prabhupāda) preside in their temple in downtown London, just off Oxford Street. Similarly in Paris are Rādhā-Parisiśvara, “Rādhā and the Lord of Paris.”

<sup>30</sup> Other temples with prominent temple worship and substantial communities I might have chosen, each with its own history and features, are: “New Dwaraka” (Los Angeles); “New Vrindavan” (West Virginia); “New Ramanreti” (Alachua, Florida); and “New Vraja Dham” (Hungary).

<sup>31</sup> A recent brochure of Bhaktivedanta Manor notes, “We are eternally grateful to George Harrison for acquiring the house and extensive grounds of Bhaktivedanta Manor for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, in 1973. As a tribute to him and his family, a memorial garden is planned in the Manor grounds” (*Bhaktivedanta Manor: College of Vedic Studies—Autumn/Winter Programme 2002*).

to the mission the mock-Tudor estate in 1973 (Nye: 11).<sup>32</sup> The gift was timely, as the downtown London Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple (opened in 1969) was becoming cramped for space to accommodate new recruits.

In August of that year, following soon after the Rathayātrā mentioned above, Prabhupāda presided over the consecration of Rādhā-Gokulānanda (“Rādhā and the Bliss of Gokula, Vrindavan”), the thirty-six-inch tall white marble *mūrtis* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa similar to several such *mūrtis* he had arranged to be sculpted in India for worship in ISKCON temples. During this event, Prabhupāda briefly addressed an audience consisting mainly of followers arguably more understanding of their devotional and institutional commitment than those of 1967 San Francisco. In his speech Prabhupāda urged his listeners to see beyond mundane appearance of place and event to appreciate the transcendent nature of the occasion.

Indeed, *place* or *location* was his opening theme. In his usual homiletic style, Prabhupāda began by quoting a Sanskrit verse, often from *Bhagavad-gītā* but this time a prayer from *Brahma-saṁhitā*. His selected text (5.43) locates Kṛṣṇa’s transcendent abode, Goloka, beyond the phenomenal cosmos, yet in his exegesis Prabhupāda stressed Kṛṣṇa’s accessibility to mortals, especially in his *mūrti* form. Through devotion based on scripturally grounded understanding anyone could approach the Lord. “ So Kṛṣṇa is everywhere, and if you are [a] devotee, then you can catch Him. This is the secret” (730821di.lon, Bhaktivedanta Vedabase).<sup>33</sup>

Echoing pāñcarātric and later Śrīvaiṣṇava reasoning on the divine status of the Lord’s *mūrti*, Prabhupāda explained that although omnipresent, Kṛṣṇa makes himself perceivable and hence worshippingable through material elements which are, after all, his own “energies.” Based on this reasoning one should understand the image of Kṛṣṇa to be “Kṛṣṇa personally,” appearing in a way “quite suitable for our vision,” i.e. perceivable by ordinary persons with ordinary powers of sight (ibid.,). Here was an emphasis on the non-extraordinary, non-miraculous character of divine grace. But there was a “secret” to obtaining such grace, namely to identify oneself as Kṛṣṇa’s devotee. By identifying oneself as such, one would be situated within the realm gov-

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<sup>32</sup> When purchased by Harrison, the estate was known as Piggotts Manor, built in 1884, and used since 1948 as a nurses’ training college by the central London hospital, St Bartholomew’s (Nye 2001: 11).

<sup>33</sup> “730821di.lon” is the search code for the transcription of this lecture, found in the Bhaktivedanta Vedabase CD-Rom.

erned by the *bhakti* logos, within which Kṛṣṇa might easily be “caught,” that is, Kṛṣṇa’s attention and favour might be gained.

The *prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā* rites, conducted in relatively simple fashion with a short *homa* (series of oblations with clarified butter into fire, accompanied with mantras) and *abhiṣeka* (consecrating bath), would mark the commencement of routine, daily worship practices akin to those we encountered in the Rādhāramaṇa temple. As on earlier similar occasions, Prabhupāda therefore concluded his talk by addressing those devotee-residents of the Manor who would be responsible for maintaining this crucial program of “Deity worship.” As he had warned his Chicago temple president, they should “not commit offense” to Kṛṣṇa by neglecting the numerous scriptural rules of *mūrti-sevā*. As we saw above and as he would so often emphasize, foremost among the rules was to maintain cleanliness.

So this Deity worship, those who are in charge of Deity worship, they never should think that here is a statue. No. Here is Kṛṣṇa. . . . You must always think that here is Kṛṣṇa personally . . . . So you should honor and think also and be cautious so that you may not commit offense. Kṛṣṇa worship, if you neglect the process, then it will be offensive. There are sixty-four kinds of offenses. You have seen it in the *Nectar of Devotion*. . . . You should be very much clean, [this is the] first thing. Cleanliness is next to godliness. Very much clean, rise early in the morning, take your bath and perform *maṅgala āraṭrika* [the initial, early morning *ārati* ceremony of the day], then chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, then read scriptures. In this way remain twenty-four hours engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service. (Ibid.)

Echoing *sāstric* warnings, Prabhupāda urged his followers to maintain a proper attitude of willful awareness of the *mūrtis*’ divinity, acting at least *as if* comprehending Kṛṣṇa’s personal presence.<sup>34</sup> And although addressing a more committed and possibly better self-disciplined group of devotees than that of the 1967 San Francisco temple, Prabhupāda still felt the need to emphasize strict adherence to the regulatory disciplines of *vaidhī-sādhana*. These were not Indians, who would likely be somewhat familiar with pan-Indian habits of maintaining physical cleanliness and ritual purity. But Prabhupāda kept his talk short, not elaborating on the details of *sādhana* practice, rather reminding his followers of basic principles they were supposed to already know from his lectures and books and from his senior disciples to whom he

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<sup>34</sup> A verse oft-quoted by Prabhupāda and Bhaktisiddhānta attributed to the Padma Purāna warns that to think of the *arcā* form of Viṣṇu as mere stone, to consider the guru an ordinary person, or to consider the divine name or water that has washed Viṣṇu’s feet as ordinary is to be a “resident of hell” (*narakī saḥ*) (CC 2.20.217, Prabhupāda’s purport).

had given direct instruction.<sup>35</sup> His concern was for institutional permanence as well as spiritual progress for his followers: they should commit themselves to long-term, daily service to Rādhā-Gokulānanda, to be performed not casually, or merely with a sense of duty, but in a spirit of dedicated service similar to that of Kṛṣṇa's most confidential associates, with a similar sense of direct proximity to the object of devotion.

This is the purpose of installing Deity. Not that after few days you think it is a burden. No, then it will be great offense. It is not burden. It is a great opportunity to serve Kṛṣṇa. As the *gopīs* are serving in Goloka Vrindavan. Kṛṣṇa is so kind. He has come here to accept your service in a manner in which you can handle Him. You can dress Kṛṣṇa, you can offer *prasāda*, you can chant His glory. In this way, always remain engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and gradually you'll find how you are advancing in spiritual life. Thank you very much. Hare Kṛṣṇa (ibid.).

The purpose of installing the deities would be defeated if the many rules to be observed in their daily worship would come to be regarded as burdensome, as the “mere ritual” of a liturgical order not supported by conviction (Rappaport: 396) and hence not supporting the cultivation of truth. Rather, devotees should consider *arcanam* “a great opportunity to serve Kṛṣṇa,” who is “so kind” to provide such opportunity. Prabhupāda would make only two or three additional visits to Bhaktivedanta Manor before his demise in 1977. His exhortations to his followers were made with conscious awareness of his own very limited future involvement in the ongoing functioning of the temple. His brief instructions were to underscore the same points written in his books. These instructions, applied with intelligence bestowed by Kṛṣṇa to serious practitioners, would need to sustain his followers in maintaining the temple permanently. Routinized charisma would need to begin immediately.<sup>36</sup>

Rādhā-Gokulānanda were not appearing in the miraculous way Rādhāramaṇa of Vrindavan was said to manifest; rather, they had been sculpted and shipped from Jaipur, India, and then placed in position on a marble “altar” fashioned in a con-

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<sup>35</sup> For a detailed description of the typical ISKCON temple morning program and an analysis in terms of purity and hierarchy, see Ketola: 95-114; for shorter descriptions see Knott 1986b: 66-72; Judah: 87-96; Zaidman-Dvir: 31-41.

<sup>36</sup> When consecrating Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *mūrtis* in Sydney in 1971, Prabhupāda had prayed to them: “I am leaving You here in this *mleccha desh*. Now, these devotees, they have come to You, kindly give them intelligence so that they can serve You nicely. This is my prayer” (Kurma Dasa: 415-16). The allusion is to *Bhagavad-gītā* 10.10, often quoted by Prabhupāda: “To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me [Kṛṣṇa] with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” (Prabhupāda's translation).

verted London suburban manor.<sup>37</sup> But for Prabhupāda’s followers, the very presence of their *guru* (whom they considered to be as much a spiritual descendent from Caitanya as Gopāla Bhaṭṭa); his mere desire for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to be present; and his command to worship were all they needed to be convinced of the Lord’s presence. Although anyone could know of the ordinary means by which the images had arrived, Prabhupāda’s perspective on divine will was decisive: “He has come here to accept your service . . .” There was no denying that Rādhā-Gokulānanda could be seen with one’s ordinary eyes, and they could be touched with one’s hands, and this was precisely what made the practices of *arcanam* extraordinary. Kṛṣṇa, as his *mūrti*, could be dressed, decorated, cooked for and sung to, with the express blessings and according to the instructions of Prabhupāda. And even if one were unable to see empiric evidence that Kṛṣṇa directly “accepts service,” Prabhupāda’s assurances, as a confidential associate of Kṛṣṇa, gave his disciples confidence to commence with the daily routine of royal hospitality. By so doing, they would “find how [they] are advancing in spiritual life,” thus confirming for them the truth of *bhakti* in the mode of *arcanam*.

Prabhupāda’s presence, his invoking the presence of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and his words of blessing and warning to his followers constituted “speech acts” of institution, or of things “truly said” (Rappaport: 113-15; 344), a creative act producing a location in which the *bhakti* logos might function. As the founding event for a temple institution, it was reminiscent of the Rādhāramaṇa temple’s founding. But unlike Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, whose intense emotional outpourings led to Rādhāramaṇa’s appearance, Prabhupāda was the reserved but devoted viceroy asserting his master’s authority with reference to scriptural authority and devotional reason. By his invocational words the Rādhā-Gokulānanda *mūrtis* assumed divine presence and hence shared in his charisma. Similarly by his words a community of worshippers came into existence, qualified to see and understand and serve Kṛṣṇa by virtue of being identified as devotees. And by the presence of devotees, divinities, *harināma* chanting and daily readings of the “Bhaktivedanta purports” (Prabhupāda’s term for his own commentaries to scripture) what was formerly Piggotts Manor became transformed into Bhaktivedanta Manor. Ordinary sculpted marble became sacred image; ordinary per-

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<sup>37</sup> Another difference with Rādhāramaṇa’s appearance was that of sequence: Whereas Rādhāramaṇa emerged from a Śalagrama stone, Śalagrama stones have been incorporated into ISKCON temple and home worship only gradually, after the establishment of images.

sons became Kṛṣṇa *bhaktas*; and an ordinary residence became an extraordinary, sacred space.

As these new identities took form and substance, expansions occurred. Missionary activity drew additional community members (including expanding families residing nearby); increasing numbers of visitors came; and additional *mūrtis* were consecrated.<sup>38</sup> And along with these expansions challenges would come as the Manor's identity and leading devotees' identities would become contested or confused.

#### IV.2.3. *Unwelcome Identities, Contested Sacred Space*

While regulated worship of Rādhā-Gokulānanda would be the “effective program” for temple residents to advance spiritually, Prabhupāda had urged the Manor devotees to encourage Hindu Indians to become involved and gradually to support the Manor financially (interview, Akhandadi Das 30-7-03). And indeed with its missionary focus the Manor would soon attract visitors, especially from the growing Hindu Indian community of greater London.<sup>39</sup> With numbers of visitors increasing from an initial trickle to a veritable flood by the early 1980's, Bhaktivedanta Manor became a pilgrimage destination for Hindu Indians throughout the U.K., especially on weekends and major Vaiṣṇava festival days, while continuing to function as a reclusive country *āśrama* (spiritual retreat centre) for its residents.<sup>40</sup> The consequent mushrooming car traffic and parking needs in the Manor's immediate vicinity would eventually lead to protracted legal battles with the residents of Letchmore Heath (the village adjacent to the Manor) and the local Council, leading to appeals all the way to

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<sup>38</sup> In response to, and to draw greater numbers of, Indian Hindus to the Manor, marble *mūrtis* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's *avatāra* counterparts Sitā-Rāma, along with their associates Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān, were consecrated in 1981 by the then spiritual authority of the community, Jayatīrtha Dāsa. Small brass images of Caitanya and Nityānanda (Gaura-Nitai) were also consecrated some time shortly after Rādhā-Gokulānanda appeared.

<sup>39</sup> That Indians were coming in increasing numbers was at least partially a consequence of their becoming settled and economically established in England, as an expression of the need to assert themselves culturally and religiously. A symbiosis between Britishers looking East and Indians looking West found apt expression in an English country manor-cum-Kṛṣṇa-temple—a complete reversal of colonialist display of success that was a paradoxical simultaneous affirmation and denial of the values so represented (Nye 2001: 24-29; Bowen: 15-18, 237-41; Knott 1986b: 56-58).

<sup>40</sup> That visitors began to come was not without concerted canvassing efforts by ISKCON devotees with Indian backgrounds, aimed at the Hindu (especially Gujarati) Indian populace (Interview, Śruti-dharma Das, 7-11-02).

the highest courts (Nye 1996). Some local residents feared a gradual take-over of their village by Manor community members after two or three properties were purchased by them; and in any case many claimed that the peace and quiet of their Green Belt country refuge from London congestion was being spoiled by incursions of traffic on weekends and holidays. For drawing such crowds for worship in its temple, the Manor management was accused of zoning infractions (turning a “theological college” into a “place of worship”). The Manor had been classified by the appropriate authorities as a “residential educational college in connection with the promotion of Krishna Consciousness,” and ISKCON members viewed the wording in the latter half of this designation as allowing for the involvement of the public (ibid.; Nye 2001: 81). Not so the local council and higher judicial authorities. At least fourteen years of difficulties and ten years of litigation and campaigning to rally support among Hindu Indians (all at considerable expense to the Bhaktivedanta Manor community) ended in 1996 with a strikingly simple settlement: the Manor would be permitted to purchase additional land on which an access driveway could be built connecting the property to a back road, effectively diverting all traffic out of the Letchmore Heath village.<sup>41</sup>

From the perspective of British public discourse on multiculturalism and minority religion (the focus of Malory Nye’s detailed study of this case), a narrative of conflicting interests and understandings about sacred space emerges from these events. Yet as Nye notes, the legal solution found, albeit long and painful in coming, was favourable to ISKCON ultimately because the worship functions the Manor fought to retain were *de facto* already in place (Nye 2001: 300-303). There was, as Rappaport might put it, a sufficient level of public *acceptance* of a ritual liturgical order, such that even in the absence of *conviction* as to that order’s holiness on the part of local residents, a way was found for the worship to continue (Rappaport: 396). In this case the *maintenance* element of ISKCON’s Vaiṣṇava tradition proved strong

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<sup>41</sup> Nye offers a thorough study and analysis of this case in his book *Multiculturalism and Minority Religions in Britain* (2001). He describes how ISKCON leaders fought the case on the level of planning discourse, after several failures successfully arguing for recognition as both a theological college (use class C2) and a place of worship (use class D1). At the same time they made effective use of religious freedom rhetoric to bolster their case. Akhandadi Das (interview 30-7-03) emphasizes the ultimately political nature of the outcome, linked to political parties’ recognition of Hindu Indian voting power after the Manor had so successfully mobilised their support. That support was dramatically shown in March and May of 1994 with demonstrations of 36,000 and 10,000 participants respectively taking place in London.

enough, with considerable *reform* or adjustment of its missionizing style,<sup>42</sup> to prevail while simultaneously accommodating local tradition of quiet country suburbia.

From a Vaiṣṇava devotional perspective, another narrative might be written about this episode. This would acknowledge the force of *de facto* worship practice, but would place at least equal emphasis on devotees' conviction coupled with divine grace as the deciding factors leading to Rādhā-Gokulānanda's "victory." In such an account, the numerous devotees who dedicated themselves to supporting the Manor in the face of protracted opposition would be seen as having been rewarded for their efforts and prayers by Rādhā-Gokulānanda.<sup>43</sup> Rādhā-Gokulānanda would emerge as divine playwrights and stage directors who engineered the ordeal for their own several inscrutable purposes, from testing the devotees' faith and spirit of service to drawing thousands of people into identifying with the Manor's cause. The ultimate purpose, according to such an account, would be that Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* had been magnified, demonstrating the divine reciprocity inherent in the relationalism that characterises the "Absolute Truth." In such a narrative, the *bhakti* logos prevails over all governmental decision-making processes, since, according to the ultimate sacred postulate of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, Kṛṣṇa's supreme order *must* prevail. In such a reading, one is reminded of Rādhāramaṇa as conductor of various "dialogues" with trends and circumstances of sixteenth-century Vrindavan (see II.1.3). In twentieth-century Britain, Rādhā-Gokulānanda, "acting" in an environment unfamiliar with the culture surrounding Kṛṣṇa worship, devised a way to call attention to themselves so that dialogue could begin to take place.

Even apart from such a devotional reading, it was clear that for those associated with the Manor its importance was centred on the presence of the shrine with its sacred images considered authentic *mūrtis*, authentically worshipped according to

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<sup>42</sup> See Nye (2001: 18-23) (citing Roy Wallis, Rasamandala Das, and Kim Knott) on ISKCON's shift away from a "world-rejecting" ethos toward one more positively communicative with the public.

<sup>43</sup> Among these devotees the Manor's undaunted temple president throughout the conflict, Akhandadi Das, stood out prominently. Akhandadi Das notes that Nye was inaccurate in his observation (2001: 188-89) that on the occasion of the opening ceremony for the new access road, he (Akhandadi Das) was referred to several times by various speakers as "Arjuna." Rather it was one council member who had, and continues to be, actively supportive of the Manor. In any case, devotional/martial rhetoric surfaced occasionally at other times. Nye notes the irony in the inclusion of clips from the Oscar-winning British-made film *Gandhi* in the Manor's film "One Step From Victory" to urge Manor visitors to join in the campaign to keep the temple open. The film encouraged these British Hindus "to be 'warriors in the fight' to save their temple, in a battle which 'would not be fought with swords or arrows, but with plastic' (i.e. credit cards)" (Nye 1996: 5).

scriptural directives by western Vaiṣṇavas initiated as brahmins within a functioning devotional community. Without this widespread tacit belief in the authenticity of the *mūrtis* and the temple institution—as an authentic and adequate expression of religious truth—no such extensive campaign to save the temple would have been possible.<sup>44</sup> It is also noteworthy that opposition to public worship at the Manor never took the form (at least publicly) of criticizing the sort of worship being conducted. Whatever might have been thought by Letchmore Heath residents about the worship being performed at the Manor, none resorted to “idolatry” rhetoric such as westerners encountering Hindus in nineteenth-century India were prone to use.<sup>45</sup>

From the perspective of liturgical orders, this contestation of sacred space might be seen as a matter of differing ultimate sacred postulates in collision, with settlement reached finally on the level of contingent circumstances—an alteration of traffic patterns for circulation to and from the sacred space by worshippers. We next consider a concurrent development at the Manor emerging in the wake of Prabhupāda’s demise in November 1977, where common acceptance of the same ultimate sacred postulates of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism prevailed, but failure to observe basic rules requisite for spiritual leadership surfaced. Bhaktivedanta Manor was one of many ISKCON temples deeply shaken, though not sunk, amidst the “perils of succession” that ensued.<sup>46</sup>

#### IV.2.4. *Internal Questions of Identity*

In 1970, seven years before his demise, Prabhupāda had established an international managerial board consisting of twelve of his (male) disciples, the Governing Body Commission (GBC), to oversee his young institution’s affairs in his absence (S. D. Goswami, vol. I 2002: 861-62). In July 1977 Prabhupāda had selected eleven (again, male) disciples, largely from the by then expanded GBC, to perform initia-

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<sup>44</sup> Regarding Indian recognition of Western qualification for priesthood, one of several indicative responses was from a regular Manor visitor, a Gujarati from Uganda who identified himself as a brahmin and a priest. When I asked what he thought of the westerners serving as *pūjārīs*, he replied, “Better than back home. They are doing brilliant work. Nowhere they are doing so much as they are doing here” (Interview, Bhaktivedanta Manor, 21-04-02).

<sup>45</sup> Akhandadi Das (ibid.) notes that the local council warned each other and local residents repeatedly not to resort to “idolatry” rhetoric, as this would be damaging to their case on the basis of zoning infractions.

<sup>46</sup> The expression “perils of succession” is drawn from T. K. Goswami’s essay title in *A Hare Krishna at Southern Methodist University*, a reprint of his 1999 ISKCON *Communications Journal* article.

tions of new devotees on his behalf and eventually (it would be argued) to assume the duties of guruship.<sup>47</sup> But within a decade after his death several of these eleven senior disciples proved themselves unqualified as gurus due to failure to maintain the basic vows of all ISKCON initiates.

The Bhaktivedanta Manor community (and U.K. ISKCON as a whole) experienced considerable disturbance as one of the eleven, its leading guru Jayatirtha Das, withdrew from ISKCON to follow a senior godbrother of Prabhupāda, Swami B. R. Sridhara, in 1982. Soon thereafter he showed laxity in observing some of the vows, leaving many of his own disciples—including some Manor community members—feeling spiritually orphaned.<sup>48</sup> His “replacement,” Bhagavan Das Goswami (also one of the initial eleven gurus) departed quite unexpectedly four years later to remarry, giving up the lifetime vows of *sannyāsa* he had recently adopted, separating from his former wife and child. It was a second devastation to ISKCON-U.K., especially for disciples of the former guru who had been advised to take “reinitiation” from the latter. Meanwhile, angry and disappointed with the new gurus generally, droves of Prabhupāda’s direct disciples worldwide distanced themselves from ISKCON temples, including the Manor. It was the painful beginning of a long process of reform on many levels of ISKCON, wherein issues of trust, identity, purity, authenticity, and spiritual qualification were intertwined.<sup>49</sup>

Again, two different narratives might be offered for these events. One might be a “post-charismatic power struggle” story with features recognisable in other young

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<sup>47</sup> Whether or not Prabhupāda intended these men to be regular gurus or simply to act as *rtviks*—priests on behalf of a posthumously initiating Prabhupāda—is contested. A vocal group, the ISKCON Reform Movement (IRM), argues against Prabhupāda having made any appointments. This disagreement has led to schism and litigation in India over ISKCON temple control, especially of the ISKCON-Bangalore temple, which is up to the time of this writing unresolved. See Broo 2003a: 193-99 for a brief discussion of the *rtvik* notion in relation to more traditional systems of guru-succession in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism.

<sup>48</sup> There are bizarre and even macabre aspects to the doings of some of the ex-ISKCON gurus, especially in regard to Jayatirtha. Relevant here is that the same Jayatirtha who had presided at the consecration of the Manor’s *Sītā-Rāma mūrtis* in 1981 is said to have been murdered and indeed decapitated in 1987 by his own disciple enraged by Jayatirtha’s sexual excesses (Mills). Jayatirtha was also the same who co-authored the *Arcana-Paddhati* on the request of Prabhupāda. This author, acquainted with Jayatirtha Das some three years prior to his departure from ISKCON, knew him as a mild, pleasant, thoughtful person with particular inclination for *arcanam* activities. His seemingly sudden changes in behaviour were puzzling to many.

<sup>49</sup> Accounts and analyses of these events include T. K. Goswami (1999: 103-20); Ravindra Svarupa dasa (1994, nos. 1 & 2: 43-52; 25-33); Rochford (1997); Brzezinski (1996-97); and Knott (1986b: 42-43, 47-49).

religious movements whose charismatic founder has died. In a simplified form of such an account one sees motivated, unqualified individuals (with varying levels of good intentions) adopting and exploiting positions of domination (imitating Prabhupāda in styles of honour received) while the dominated (with equally good intentions) rank and file devotees accept their lot willingly in exchange for gratification of various social and psychological wants and needs.

The other, Vaiṣṇava devotional narrative, might have several differing versions to interpret events in terms of the *bhakti* logos. Essential features might include the prevailing of the encompassing order of the *bhakti* logos; Kṛṣṇa's allowing or "arranging" for the logos to be violated, so that reforms would occur and greater determination to serve Kṛṣṇa under Prabhupāda's direction would be aroused; and a demonstration that *arcanam*, along with the daily prescribed *sādhana* routine for all devotees, has a spiritually protective value when scrupulously observed. Secondary causes for violation of the *bhakti* logos might be offered, centred on over-confidence in themselves on the part of leaders, and failures in observance of protocol (especially gurus expecting their own godbrothers and godsisters to show the same deference to them as disciples; and a general ISKCON policy that encouraged disrespect of senior Vaiṣṇavas outside ISKCON). Such accounts would, and have been, put forward with profuse reference to the canonical texts with their ample warnings and narrative examples of practice failures proving the ultimate soundness of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*.<sup>50</sup>

A specific and pertinent question related to *arcanam* was raised by devotees in Bhaktivedanta Manor after Jayatirtha's departure. Since it had been he who had presided over the consecration of the Sītā-Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa-Hanumān *mūrtis* in the Manor in 1981, what was *their* status in light of *his* loss of *adhikāra*? Was their divinity in some way compromised, considering that the person invoking the divinities'

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<sup>50</sup> The daily morning BhP classes in ISKCON temples have, over the years, been venues for extensive discussions on causes and remedies for deviation from the path of *bhakti* practice, based on BhP, CC, and related texts. Increasing attention to other sources has occurred in recent years, from contemporary "enlightened management" to humanistic or transpersonal psychology books. Such writers are met with mixed acceptance by ISKCON members.

Other devotional interpretations of ISKCON's guru succession troubles are put forward by devotees who left ISKCON to become followers of other, generally senior Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas connected to other organizations, especially the various Gauḍīya Maṭhas, but increasingly others. According to such accounts, the spiritual centre of gravity has moved away from ISKCON, there being no one in ISKCON, in their view, of spiritual calibre comparable to Prabhupāda.

presence may not have been “properly situated” in devotional behaviour or consciousness at the time of consecration? Here was a potential conundrum, since the answer seemed to depend on incalculables, the “analogue” character of qualification, at a by-gone period in time. This was not quite the sort of question dealt with in *sāstra*, to anyone’s knowledge.<sup>51</sup>

In the ensuing discussion devotees recalled that during a deity consecration in India Śrīla Prabhupāda had said that the essential element of the rite was *samkīrtanam*, the congregational chanting of *harināma*. This had certainly been done during the consecration of Sītā-Rāma. Moreover, there was no clear reason to believe that Jayatirtha had not been “in good standing” at the time of the event; and in any case, the presiding priest, in calling the divinities to be present, does so on behalf of the Vaiṣṇava community, not for himself. These reasons, and the fact that strictly regulated worship of the *mūrtis* in question had been performed daily since their consecration, led to the general conclusion that there was no need for remedial measures to be taken (Akhandadi Das, *ibid.*).

Indeed, what is of interest to us here is that amidst these times of external and internal confusion, the authority and charismatic presence of the deities—Rādhā-Gokulānanda and Sītā-Rāma—remained undisturbed and only briefly and limitedly questioned on a temple administrative level. Nor was there a question whether the daily *arcanam* practices in the temple should go on, or whether the “morning program”—the *sādhana* routine set up by Prabhupāda—should be continued. As Rappaport observes, *performance*, as an integral element of ritual, is not merely a substitute for another form of communication. The expression of the truth of *bhakti* meant that daily performance of relatively invariant ritual actions despite the presence of disturbing conditions must continue if Kṛṣṇa were to be pleased. Bhaktivedanta Manor survived those turbulent times largely because of the persistent daily *arcanam* program (including the chanting of *harināma* in the temple before the *mūrtis*) coupled with persistent honour given to Prabhupāda’s writings. Daily formal readings of his translations of the *Bhāgavata Purāna* with his extensive commentary, followed by further explanation by those leading the reading, acted as the discursive complement

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<sup>51</sup> The HBV (19.1000-1048) does contain remedial procedures for purification of images in cases of serious faults or transgressions in the worship, and for restoration of damaged images.

to non-discursive ritual, sustaining sufficient sense of holiness and the sense of connection to enduring tradition for the temple to persist (Rappaport: 37-38; 384).

We can summarize observations on Bhaktivedanta Manor's persistence through challenges to identity in terms of *mūrti-sevā*. First, for the Manor community members, whatever else might have been uncertain, Rādhā-Gokulananda's divinity was beyond question, necessarily so as embodiment of the ultimate sacred postulate of the tradition. Second, Rādhā-Gokulananda and the other *mūrtis* were the loci of *bhakti* for the community, acting as bastions against whatever impurity and inauspiciousness was felt to be impinging upon it or on individual members.<sup>52</sup> To maintain their daily worship was seen as the best means to resist threatening influences. Third, the invariance of daily worship rites tended to perpetuate those rites (Rappaport 36-7; 283-87). Contributing to invariability was the simple fact of the *mūrtis'* (apparent) inaction. Whereas a living person continuously acts, and therefore can exhibit misconduct, the image remains, as it were, frozen in position—perfect, because perfectly immobile.

But all these explanations of persistence are missing a crucial consideration, that which gives the *bhakti* logos its power, namely its attractiveness. For devotees of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa's being the "all-attractive" Lord implies that devotional activity occurs within the realm of aesthetics. We have seen how important aesthetic expression has been in Rādhāramaṇa's worship, and its importance has not been lost on western devotees, even if in differing or less expert ways. As Rappaport observes (386), "[I]t is plausible to suppose that religious art in all its forms has a special and important (although perhaps not indispensable) part to play in the 'attainment of grace', the union of the 'reasons of the heart' with 'the reasons of reason'." For the *bhakti* logos, it may not be wrong to say that art is indispensable, or rather integral to its being. In Bhaktivedanta Manor, the daily dressing of the *mūrtis* in fresh clothes and flower garlands; the singing of devotional chants; and the partaking of food sanctified as *prasāda*—all contributed to the spiritual enlivenment of devotees, drawing them to

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<sup>52</sup> Related to this, persistent daily worship also served to answer questions of personal identity. As Angela Burr points out, the notion "I am not this body, I am spirit soul" repeatedly taught by Prabhupāda can be understood as a message of societal rejection (Burr: 8-9). Devotees were enjoined to see themselves as "eternal servant of Krishna," an identity meant to be imbibed by daily devotional practices centred on chanting the *mahā-mantra* (Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra) and worshipping the *mūrti* of Kṛṣṇa.

participate in communal temple life. The sense experiences associated with Kṛṣṇa and his service thus contributed to the Manor's continuation through difficult times.

Having considered the feature of endurance of the Rādhāramaṇa temple in chapter two, we might now ask what a hereditary Rādhāramaṇa temple priest would say about this theme in relation to the Manor's internal disturbances over succession. He is likely to say that such troubles are precisely what Gopāla Bhaṭṭa managed to avoid in his temple by establishing a hereditary succession of householders. With its hereditary householder priesthood and guruship system, Rādhāramaṇa has avoided much of the perils of succession experienced in ISKCON, so that community cohesion, and hence worship of Rādhāramaṇa, has proceeded over generations largely without disturbance.<sup>53</sup> In ISKCON, community disturbance occurred over leadership failure in cultivation or practice of *vaidhī-bhakti*, a crucial matter where hereditary ("digitally" determined qualification) is absent. Certainly this ambiguity will remain for western Vaiṣṇavas, though it may take on less raw features as devotee demographics change to a more congregational centre of gravity. Indeed, yet another factor contributing to the Manor community's survival was another "migration"—from one stage of life to another, namely from the unmarried student (*brahmacārī*-) to the householder order (*grhastha-āśrama*).<sup>54</sup> This became the basis for a process of community transformation with important implications for image worship at the Manor. Where originally the temple served a single, semi-monastic community of largely unmarried young adults, two further groups served by the temple have grown during the last three decades. The Hindu Indians is one group; the other is the circa three hundred western devotee *grhasthas* who live in the vicinity of the Manor. As one might expect, both have wide ranges of participation in the Manor's increasing range of activities and programs (Akhandadi Das, *ibid.*).

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<sup>53</sup> At least this is the impression given by the history of Rādhāramaṇa community as far as this author knows it. However some disruptions of more recent times in internal managerial affairs, leading to new organisational developments and written resolutions have been noted by Gaurakṛṣṇa Goswami (175-78). Margaret Case (1995: 49) notes that litigation is the order of the day in countless Vrindavan temple disputes, but that Rādhāramaṇa goswami cousins have managed to settle their differences out of court, largely because of the possibility for families to move to one of several temples in other cities that are connected to the Rādhāramaṇa community. Another type of disruption was the general threat of danger to temples throughout Vrindavan from Muslim powers during the seventeenth century, a time during which, Rādhāramaṇa goswamis report, their ancestors occasionally felt compelled to nocturnally guard Rādhāramaṇa "with bows and poison-tipped arrows" by placing him in a boat on the Kaliya-daha (previously a lake adjacent to the river Yamunā).

<sup>54</sup> See Rasamandala dasa for an analysis of changing models of ISKCON membership in recognition of changing demographics and aims of the Society.

#### IV.2.5. Visual Theology: Two Temples In One

As we continue to view Bhaktivedanta Manor as a focal point for ISKCON image worship in the West, we move forward to the present-day situation. The period of institutional shakiness previously described has passed, and relative stability and prosperity prevail, resembling in some respects the present situation in Rādhāramaṇa temple.<sup>55</sup> By looking briefly at the shrine room of the Manor as a visual text communicating visual theology, we can get a useful picture of pertinent Manor community and worship features, possibly illuminating how the Manor, as microcosm of ISKCON, presently functions as a “missionizing-yet-partially-embodied community.” The configuration of images on the “altar” can be read in a quite straightforward manner to suggest that the temple is, in effect, two temples in one, represented by the two dominant “sets” of images—the large (half life-size) marble Rādhā-Gokulānanda on the left, and (of equal height and also marble) Sītā-Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa-Hanumān to the viewer’s right. Between these two main tableaux in their own semi-enclosure are the considerably smaller metal Gaura-Nitai (Caitanya and Nityānanda) images.<sup>56</sup> The visual dominance of the two tableaux—Rādhā-Gokulānanda and Sītā-Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa-Hanumān—is intensified by the ornately carved north Indian style gold-leafed wooden canopies, one over each set of images.

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<sup>55</sup> Regarding Rādhāramaṇa’s financial situation, it has maintained running costs in recent years through interest from a fixed deposit established by the goswamis’ collective disciples. Recent reductions in interest rates and increased costs have made the financial situation less favourable than prior to the interest rate reduction (Interview, Padmanabh Goswami 17-6-02). Bhaktivedanta Manor thus far has no such fixed deposit, but runs largely on donations from the Indian congregation and visitors, and especially from fees received for the performance of weddings (for which the Manor is booked more than a year in advance). Gross annual income (and nearly equal outgo) is in the vicinity of three million pounds. (*Shree Krishna Janmashtami 2002* souvenir, 54-55).

<sup>56</sup> There are additional, smaller *mūrtis* and pictures: Directly in front of Rādhā-Gokulānanda are their *utsava-mūrtis*, small metal, movable forms that receive the daily morning *pūjā*, including physical bathing. On the Sītā-Rāma side, receiving the daily morning *pūjā* “on behalf of” Sītā-Rāma, is a single *śālagrāma* stone displayed in a miniature throne. In front and below the altar is a shelf on which are lined up small pictures (smaller than A4) in silver frames of (from left to right) Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Gaurakiśora-dāsa Bābājī, and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and Jagannāthadāsa Bābājī—all seated in cross-legged fashion. Three other pictures are present—one depicting the six Goswamis of Vrindavan; one depicting the “Pañca-tattva” (Śrī Caitanya and his four primary associates); and a depiction of Nṛsimha-avatāra, the half-man, half-lion descent who protected the devoted Prahlāda.

These two “sets” thus tell the viewer of a simple equation: Rādhā-Gokulānanda and Sītā-Rāma are ontologically equivalent as one and the same Lord and Śakti. Yet they are also significantly different with regard to predominating *rasas* associated with them. We have already discussed the Caitanyaite theology of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in chapter one in relation to the BhP and CC (in I.2.1.4; I.2.2.1; and I.2.2.2). As the performer of intimate sports in Vrindavan centred in *mādhurya-rasa*, the attitude or “conceit” of conjugal love, Kṛṣṇa is sometimes popularly referred to as the “Supreme Lord of Sport” (*līlā-puruṣottama*). Unlike Kṛṣṇa, Rāma is celebrated as the divine upholder and embodiment of *dharma* or divine law and is popularly referred to as the “Supreme Lord of Propriety” (*maryādā-puruṣottama*), whereby *maryādā* is identified by Rūpa Gosvāmī (BRS 1.2.269) as equivalent to *vidhi*.<sup>57</sup> Rāma’s celebrated monkey devotee Hanumān, appearing at the Manor in his typical pose of worshipful submission (kneeling on one knee, with folded hands, facing Rāma), exemplifies *dāsya-rasa*, the attitude or relish of servitorship.

The two sets of images next to each other show iconographically the complementarity of these two “paths,” even though Rāma and his associates, honoured as descents of Kṛṣṇa and his associates in an earlier time, take decidedly subordinate roles in the Caitanyaite tradition.<sup>58</sup> The prominence of Sītā-Rāma at Bhaktivedanta Manor suggests a significant shift in emphasis, an attempt to establish balance between the two poles of worship style we have been discussing—the rule-governed mode of worship (*vaidhī-bhakti*) and the emotion-driven mode of worship (*rāgānuga-bhakti*).

Gaura-Nitai, standing between and slightly forward from Rādhā-Gokulānanda and Sītā-Rāma, in effect bind together the two main sets of images and demonstrate their own centrality for followers of Caitanya. At the same time they remain subdued due to their lesser size, indicating their mood of servitorship to the main images. As the middle point of the altar, they embody the spirit of accommodation (within limits) narratively indicated in Caitanya’s visiting a variety of temples (see I.2.2.4) and

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<sup>57</sup> I have not been able to trace a source for these expressions, *maryādā-* and *līlā-puruṣottama*, but an Internet search shows that they are quite widespread in popular Hinduism.

<sup>58</sup> In the BhP (ninth book) is a brief summary of the famous story of Rāma, described in greater detail in the Sanskrit epic *Rāmāyaṇa*, attributed to Vālmīki. The CC shows accommodation of Rāma worship in two accounts of Caitanya appreciating the dedication of specific devotees of Rāma. Otherwise, the emphasis on Kṛṣṇa worship seems to be reflected in a lack of Rāma’s image in most Caitanya Vaiṣṇava temples.

in Caitanya's associate Nityānanda's converting to Vaiṣṇavism several groups of low- and outcaste persons (Kennedy: 61-63).<sup>59</sup>

This configuration of *mūrtis* in the Manor also indicates or reflects features of the Manor in regard to types of worshippers, relationship of ISKCON to greater British society, and the nature of the Manor as representative of ISKCON as a missionizing-yet-partially-embodied community. But this is by no means to say that there are clear-cut divisions of outlook or that there are two separate groups—one worshipping according to *vidhi*, the other according to *rāga*, or that one group gives attention to Rāma, the other to Kṛṣṇa. Rather, the indications and reflections are of processes of development in an ever-changing locus which is the complex community of Bhaktivedanta Manor. In this respect, to borrow Norman Cutler's optical analogy, the *mūrtis* function as “holograms,” or visual metonyms of the Manor “universe” and, more widely, the ISKCON universe (Waghorne and Cutler: 163-64).

Beginning with the central figures, Gaura-Nitai, we can consider them the embodiments of mission and the spirit of expansion I described in the beginning of this chapter. Caitanya and Nityānanda are identified as Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma respectively (CC 1.1.5-11), and together they “dissipate the darkness of ignorance” (CC 1.1.2) that pervades the world in the present degraded age of Kali. As such they represent disruption of ordinary worldly activity and the pursuit of enlightenment: together with the outward movement of mission and expansion is the inward movement toward withdrawal from the world. Bhaktivedanta Manor's resident unmarried students (*brahmacārīs* and “*brahmacārīnīs*”), who are primarily engaged in these modes of activity, can be identified with Gaura-Nitai.

Sītā-Rāma, together with Rāma's brother Lakṣmaṇa and simian devotee Hanumān, are poised in their classical durbar formation, indicating the successful conclusion of Rāma's narrative, culminating in his slaying the ten-headed abductor of Sītā after living exiled in the forest for fourteen years. In this pose, Sītā-Rāma are the emblems of pious royal power and dharmic domestic life. Like Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa (see II.1.2), but on the human plane, they represent dharmic order, prosperity, security, and social establishment—values associated with Bhaktivinoda's notion of *naimit-*

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<sup>59</sup> Regarding limits of accommodation, the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava literature gives little evidence of accommodating worship practices much outside of Vaiṣṇavism proper. There is very little accommodation to Durgā or Kālī worship; and although Caitanya Mahāprabhu visits some Śiva temples and is said to have met Śiva and Parvatī and spoken privately with them once in south India, there is no account of him interacting directly with Śaivites.

*tika-dharma* (III.1.2), or the temporal sphere of religion. As the Manor's unmarried residents became *grhasthas* and engaged more with wider British society, these this-worldly ideals have become increasingly meaningful to them.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the vast numbers of Hindu Indian visitors are family folk, increasingly becoming established in British society and economically stable after resettling from east Africa or India. Sītā-Rāma, revered by Vaiṣṇavas throughout India who know their story from various vernacular versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, also reflect their cultural hopes and aspirations, and to varying degrees the political consciousness associated in recent decades with Hindu nationalism.

If Sītā-Rāma embody the values associated with *naimittika-dharma*, Rādhā-Gokulānanda embody the values associated with *nitya-dharma*, defined by Bhaktivinoda as “pure spiritual practice.” Here I would suggest that *spiritual aspiration* is a key for identifying Rādhā-Gokulānanda's “place” among the several divine images in the Manor community. As such they represent and embody the fullness of spiritual reciprocation, the opportunity for all worshippers to participate in the *bhakti* logos to the fullest extent of their capacities up to Kṛṣṇa-*preman*, exalted love of Kṛṣṇa that surpasses liberation. All types of worshippers can and should approach Rādhā-Gokulānanda, but few would be expected to be adequately spiritually adept to do so, worshipping them as Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. As we saw earlier Prabhupāda had directed his disciples to worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa “as Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa,” i.e. in the preparatory stage of approach (*vaidhī-bhakti*) resonant with the mood of service characterising Sītā-Rāma worship. In Neville and Wildman's terms (2001c: 165-67), as “interpreters of religious truth,” Prabhupāda saw his disciples as beginners on the path of spiritual virtuosity who were as yet unready to adequately or appropriately engage with the “referents” of that truth, in this case Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. *Mūrtis* as such provide facility for preparatory engagement, yet Prabhupāda stipulated the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa provision to make his students' *arcanam* engagement yet more appropriate. But also this provision would, he felt, be appropriate for ISKCON's public temples, to which visitors with little or know familiarity with the tradition would be coming.

These basic features of the Manor temple's visual theology could be further expanded, but they will suffice to highlight differences with the Rādhāramaṇa temple

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Knott 1986: 232, on the recognition that “happiness, health, and improved relationships are also important” along with pursuit of enlightenment, in modern Hindu-related groups.

in Vrindavan. In chapter two we considered the visual theology of Rādhāramaṇa temple, noting that the one image, Rādhāramaṇa, is regarded as simultaneously one and several divine identities. We also noted that Rādhāramaṇa is “in dialogue” with various worship traditions, acknowledging or even celebrating their existence. Rādhā-Gokulānanda and the other *mūrtis* are similarly participating in dialogue, both among themselves and with the various sorts of worshippers and casual visitors. Here the situation out of Vrindavan and in the West calls for explicit multiplicity of images and divine identities to engage viewers and worshippers. Whereas in Rādhāramaṇa temple there is a sense of hidden “multiple dimensions of the divine” (Waghorne and Cutler: 166-67), in the Manor divine multiplicity is visible at a glance. Even as Rādhāramaṇa’s singularity needs to be seen in the context of an Indian pilgrimage centre teeming with temples and images, and Bhaktivedanta Manor in a context the reverse of this (being a complete pilgrimage centre in itself), it is clear that their respective overall “presentations” are different variations on the same theme, namely participation in the logos of *bhakti*.

To explore this difference in emphasis, let us focus again on written and recited texts to venture a comparison of worship practices between the two temples, involving small textual details. One text is a single verse recited daily by Bhaktivedanta Manor *pūjārīs* at the beginning of the morning worship; the other is one of the three verses we encountered in Rādhāramaṇa’s lunch offering (II.2.2). Both, as liturgical texts daily recited by temple priests within the sanctum, are “canonical messages” of ritual invariance set in “performative religious language,” or expressions of religious truth by language not primarily assertative in character (Rappaport: 52-53; Neville & Wildman 2001c: 171-72).

### IV.3. THE RĀGA OF VIDHI AND THE VIDHI OF RĀGA

#### IV.3.1. Proclamatory and Petitionary Verses

The verse recited in Bhaktivedanta Manor is one we already encountered in chapter one (I.2.2.3), quoted from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and said to have been recited by Caitanya during Jagannātha Rathayātrā in Purī. In the Manor (and in many ISKCON temples, as well as Gauḍīya Mathas) this verse serves the function of *bhūta-śuddhi*. Standard Pañcarātrika and related texts such as HBV prescribe the *bhūta-śuddhi* rite preparatory to daily image worship. *Bhūta-śuddhi* is essentially an elabo-

rate visualisation of destruction and reconstitution of the bodily elements for the purpose of divinisation—upgrading oneself to a level of purity equal to the personage to be worshipped.<sup>61</sup> As a transformative rite it parallels or recapitulates initiation, in simplified and internalised form.

Whereas, to my knowledge, present-day Rādhāramaṇa priests generally forego this practice altogether in daily worship, ISKCON *pūjārīs* observe a highly abbreviated form of it.<sup>62</sup> This consists in simply reciting the CC verse wherein the worshipper identifies himself as Kṛṣṇa’s servant. I cite its translation again:

I am neither a brahmin nor a ksatriya, neither a vaiśya nor a śūdra; I am neither a brahmacārin nor a gṛhastha, neither a vānaprastha nor a sannyāsin. Rather (I am) the servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of that brilliant supremely blissful ocean of nectar, the Maintainer of the *gopīs* [Kṛṣṇa].<sup>63</sup> (CC 2.13.80; *Padyāvalī* 74)

In chapter one I called attention to the oppositional character of this message, whereby the denial of several possible generic social identities is counterposed, or over-ridden, with the singular affirmation or acceptance of servitorship to the very particular divinity loved by the Vrindavan *gopīs*. But those who are now reciting this text are western devotees for whom neither the eight divisions of *varṇāśrama* nor the one master of the *gopīs*, nor the *gopīs*, had any meaning whatsoever prior to exposure to the ISKCON mission. Regarding *varṇāśrama*, what they know of it now, from the canonical texts and profuse explication by Prabhupāda, is of normative categories

<sup>61</sup> HBV discusses *bhūta-śuddhi* rather briefly (5.63-73), but the commentary to these verses gives elaborate details of the procedure. In regard to ritual invariance, verse 73 is noteworthy: “Or else, *bhūta-śuddhi* can be accomplished simply by meditating,” to which the commentator adds, “i.e., if one is unable to perform it as described ” and notes that there are several opinions how it is to be performed, and that hence one should follow one’s own *sampradāya* for details. As a rite of self-transformation, it might be compared with Kapila’s meditation on Viṣṇu in the BhP (section I.2.1.1.), and with Bhaktivinoda’s description of *śaranāgati*.

<sup>62</sup> There is no prescription for *bhūta-śuddhi* performance in the *Nitya-sevā-mañjarī*, the manual for daily worship we discussed in chapter two. This appears to be a matter of individual preference according to instruction the Goswamis receive from their gurus. Observing the August 2001 Krishna-janmāṣṭamī celebration at Rādhāramaṇa, I saw two priests who led the *abhiṣeka* prepare themselves with preliminary meditations, likely including this rite.

ISKCON *pūjārīs* follow a prescription for *bhūta-śuddhi* in *The Process of Deity Worship* (*Arcana-paddhati*), the manual based on the *Arcana-paddhati* of Keśavajī Gauḍiyya Maṭh. *Pūjārīs* performing the morning worship (bathing and dressing) precede their individual duties by chanting this verse, together with other Sanskrit verses invoking remembrance of Viṣṇu and auspiciousness.

<sup>63</sup> In classical *varṇa-dharma*, ksatriyas are of the martial class, vaiśyas are the productive classes, and śūdras are the servant and artisan classes. See chapter three, fn. 26 on the four classical *āśramas*.

framed within the missionary context. This context asserts, as we learned in chapter three, that the *sāragrāhī-vaiṣṇava* transcends these categories in his or her service to Kṛṣṇa or rather comprehends all of them.<sup>64</sup> And such comprehension assumes dis-identification of the self with the temporal body, hence with all social/cosmological designations. For these devotees, the verse thus describes two sets of ideals, pointing to the latter one (being Kṛṣṇa’s servant several times removed) as both superior and ontologically factual, even if far from fully realised by the ritual performer. In that respect the verse goes further than *bhūta-śuddhi* in describing not merely a purified body, but a devotional body fit for serving Kṛṣṇa. It also replaces one (social) hierarchy with another (spiritual) hierarchy, where one places oneself at the bottom of a chain of Kṛṣṇa’s servants.

Now let us look again at the last of the three petitionary verses for Rādhāramaṇa’s lunch:

May the pleasure you find in the milk offered by Śyamalā, the sweets offered by Kamalā, the *ladḍu* offered by Bhadrā, and the nectar offered by Somābhā (Candrāvalī) be had by you a hundred-fold in my offering placed before you, prepared under the order of Rādhā. (*Padyāvalī* 118)

I noted in chapter two that this (and the two accompanying verses) is a message of hope. The *pūjārī* hopes minimally that his divine addressee, Rādhāramaṇa, will be pleased with the food offering he has just placed before the *mūrti* in the manner prescribed in the *Nitya-sevā-mañjarī*. By implication, the *pūjārī* hopes to realise an intimate relationship with Kṛṣṇa similar to that of the exemplar devotees mentioned in the verse. Like the previous verse, this tells of a possibility of attainment, a striving for virtuosity not yet achieved. But whereas the previous verse declares an ideal condition of the practitioner, this verse appeals to divine grace, the essential correlate to the practitioner’s qualification. As Neville and Wildman point out (2001c: 165-66), in cultivating or embodying truth, the virtuosity one strives for is fostered or enhanced by a “cultural-linguistic system” (perhaps comparable to Cantwell Smith’s “cumulative tradition”), in which one lives and functions. And, in theistic traditions

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<sup>64</sup> In a conversation Prabhupāda commented, “Kṛṣṇa conscious person should be all-inclusive. He must be a politician, he must be a brāhmaṇa, he must be a kṣatriya, he must be a śūdra— everything. All-inclusive. Because he is transcendental. In otherwise he is neither a brāhmaṇa, neither a śūdra, neither a... Yes. *Nāham vipro na ca nara-patir na yatir vā* [the verse we are discussing above]. Neither of these. In other side he is everything. That is Kṛṣṇa conscious. As Kṛṣṇa is sometimes cowherd boy, politician, sometimes dancing with, artist— He is everything, not one-sided” (761113rc.vrn).

such as Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, success in gaining such truth is understood to depend ultimately on divine grace. The Rādhāramaṇa priest is surrounded from childhood with cultural advantages by virtue of birth in a Rādhāramaṇa goswami family, including guidance from senior goswamis and scriptures, and residence in the sacred land of Vrindavan. Yet by reciting this verse, he accepts the need for divine grace which, in Caitanyaite theology of divine independence, can never be demanded.

What do these two verses tell us about the difference between Rādhāramaṇa temple and Bhaktivedanta Manor, or between Rādhāramaṇa worship and Rādhā-Gokulānanda, Sītā-Rāma, and Gaura-Nitai worship? Without putting undo metonymic strain on two single verses to encapsulate whole temple communities, the idea is to highlight complementarity. There is a difference in *emphasis* within a common “system” or “tradition,” where *vidhi* and *rāga* intermingle to sustain *bhakti*. In both cases the worship is conceived as *sādhana*, or practice, but worship in the Manor stresses conscious adoption of a spiritual path, and the possibility of oneself becoming qualified through practice despite one’s faults. Rādhāramaṇa worship emphasizes settledness in the routine of spiritual practice and confidence that Kṛṣṇa will be satisfied by the cumulative ongoing practice as such. The *bhūta-suddhi* verse stating “I am a servant of Kṛṣṇa” says, for its reciters, “I should think and act as a servant of Kṛṣṇa, not as a worldly-minded person.” It is the prayer of a “missionizing-yet-partially-embodied” community because it stresses transformation, yet acceptance of embodiment with a *bhakti*-structured hierarchy, graded by types and degrees of *rāga*.

In Rādhāramaṇa temple, the emphasis is on observance of rules not so much to make oneself qualified, since it is presumed one is in a general sense qualified from birth and by the privileged brahmanical culture that birth has provided. Rather, observance of the rules is more a way to please Rādhāramaṇa, who is understood to like things done in certain relatively invariant ways. It is *vidhi* performed to enrich *rāga*. The *rāja-bhoga* verse requesting Rādhāramaṇa to be pleased by the priest’s lunch offering says, for its reciters, “May my offering please you, because it compares favourably with the quality of offerings you are accustomed to receive from your intimate consorts.” It is the prayer of an “embodied community” because rather than questioning self-identity it suggests close affiliation with Kṛṣṇa’s intimate associates, showing proximity by naming exemplary individual residents of Vrindavan one might hope to approach.

Before turning attention again more specifically to Bhaktivedanta Manor and ISKCON, I must point out that identifying Rādhāramaṇa temple as an embodied community is actually an over-simplification. It also has a missionizing aspect, in that several Rādhāramaṇa goswamis engage in missionary efforts within India, arguably in the spirit of Caitanya and his followers.<sup>65</sup> Nor is it that Rādhāramaṇa goswamis are “beyond” the questioning of self-identity exemplified in the first of these two verses. As readers of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and followers of Śrī Caitanya, who is recorded there as having recited this verse, they are encouraged to also question self-identity (“I am not a brahmin . . . nor a grhastha . . .”) in pursuing successful practice of Rādhāramaṇa-sevā. Rather than designating the Rādhāramaṇa community simply as “embodied,” it might more accurately be called an “embodied-yet-missionizing community.”

Conversely, while Bhaktivedanta Manor is very consciously mission oriented, in its comparatively short thirty years its community looks cautiously for appropriate ways to connect more solidly to those elements of practice that emphasize *rāga*. The challenges in finding the right balance, or the right location, for an ISKCON temple such as the Manor, in the *vidhi/rāga* map are indicated by the myriad questions that arise in recent years over proper and improper temple worship practices, sometimes precipitating sharp controversy on a global ISKCON scale.

#### IV.3.2. Uni- and Multi-form Iconography and Universalism

We now come to one example of an ISKCON controversy (in which the Manor was involved) over iconography to illustrate how creativity in *arcanam* as an effort to give space for *rāga* has met with resistance within the Society. Both the charismatic strength and potential danger of images as expressions of religious truth or falsehood

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<sup>65</sup> In this connection it is also interesting to note a friendly link between the Rādhāramaṇa temple and the Gauḍīya Maṭha, and later ISKCON, that began in the early twentieth century. Madhusūdhana Gosvāmī of Rādhāramaṇa met Bhaktisiddhānta at the time of the latter’s public debate in Midnapur in 1911 (for which he prepared the book *Brāhmaṇa O Vaiṣṇava*) and was supportive of the latter’s position arguing for the superiority of Vaiṣṇavas over brahmins. Later, in 1932, it was Madhusūdhana Gosvāmī who welcomed Bhaktisiddhānta and his followers into the Rādhāramaṇa temple while other temples locked their doors in protest of his challenges to Vaiṣṇava-*santāna* casteism in the temples (interview, Padmanabh Goswami, October 2001 [reading from Madhusūdhana G.’s diary]; Rūpa Vilāsa 1988: 33-35). This is not to say that all Rādhāramaṇa goswamis, then or now, have shared such openness to missionizing in the style shown by the Gauḍīya Maṭha and ISKCON.

within the context of a missionizing/universalising institution will be apparent from this account.<sup>66</sup>

For the Bhaktivedanta Manor's annual Govardhana-pūjā celebration in November 2001 the head *pūjārī* "rearranged" the Gokulānanda *mūrti* to appear as Govardhana-dhari, the divine Lifter of Govardhana Hill (see I.2.1.3). With artful dressing that hid the normal flute-playing arms and two temporarily added arms, Gokulānanda appeared to hold aloft a papier-mache "hill" representing sacred Govardhana while resting his right hand on his hip. The immediate source of inspiration for this iconographic innovation was a similar practice in New Vraja Dhama, the ISKCON farm community in southwestern Hungary. Lately Śivarāma Swami, the Hungarian-Canadian *sannyāsī* and GBC secretary overseeing both Hungarian and U.K. ISKCON missions, has encouraged artistically talented devotees at New Vraja Dhama to embellish that community's festivals, in the spirit of Prabhupāda's suggestions for festivals at the newly established Los Angeles temple (see IV.1.1). By graphic portrayals of themes associated with Kṛṣṇa's Vrindavan-*lilās* focused on the temple's main images, Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, devotees would be enlivened with the sense of divine surprise and intimacy so much celebrated in Caitanya Vaiṣṇava texts. So, for example, on Rādhā's appearance day (Rādhāṣṭami) in September 2001 the marble Rādhā *mūrti* "appeared" with her left arm (otherwise extended downward) raised to balance a milk-jug on her head.<sup>67</sup>

When the propriety of such artifice was mildly questioned in an ISKCON Internet forum,<sup>68</sup> one reader defended it on the basis of both Vrindavan tradition and ISKCON's "goal of Deity Worship" as an element of devotional practice:

You might be interested to know that there is a Deity of Lord Chaitanya in Vrindavana . . . that is made of wood and has movable arms. Sometimes they are up and sometimes down, and sometimes one is up and the other is down. Also this same deity is dressed as Sad Bhuja [six-armed] sometimes where 4

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<sup>66</sup> See Miles (166-67) for a brief discussion on the social effects of images and representation conceived as strength or danger in different times or circumstances. In our context of concern for religious truth as expression, images as non-expressive of religious truth would be counted as deceptive and therefore dangerous by misleading devotees into falsity or failure.

<sup>67</sup> NVD has a sizeable art department from which such alterations are prepared. This appearance is suggestive of *dāna-keli-lilā*, in which Kṛṣṇa acts as tax-collector obstructing the *gopīs'* routine transport of milk for selling, described in Rūpa's Sanskrit drama, *Dānakelikau-mudī*.

<sup>68</sup> "PAMHO," a Vaiṣṇava Internet e-mail provider maintains, among numerous conferences, one on "Deity Worship" with a few hundred participants.

extra limbs are portrayed.<sup>69</sup> All thanks to the dedicated work of His pujari servants. We commonly place objects in our Deities hands in ISKCON and also attempt to enhance Their beauty in other innovative ways. Why should this be considered any different? Our goal in Deity Worship is twofold. 1. To satisfy the Lord and 2. To attract His devotees to His wonderful form (Gaura Keshava Das, [PAMHO “Deity Worship” listserv, 2001]).

In a lengthy response to this message, reasons were given why the Hungarian instance *should* be considered different from the Vrindavan precedent. To clinch his argument, the opposing author quoted from a letter written by Prabhupāda sharply reprimanding one disciple for an inappropriate *arcanam*-related question. Prabhupada had written in 1973:

. . . From now on unless I order you something change or in addition, go on with the usual standard way. You manufacture ideas and then I have to waste my time. I have given you everything already, there is no need for you to add anything or change anything. Why you are asking these things? Who has given you such freedom? Pujari should operate entirely under the supervision of temple president and GBC, not independently. The greatest danger to our movement will come when we manufacture and create our own process for worshipping the deities. So don't ask any more new questions, whatever is going on, follow it just to the exact standard as I have given you, that's all. (Letter to Dhruvananda, 73-01-04)

This letter excerpt contrasts in mood from the same letter's beginning and contrasts with many other, more positively encouraging letters to *pūjārīs* from Prabhupāda. Still, for some ISKCON devotees, this letter extract establishes an unequivocal and final prohibition on any and all changes or innovations in the Society's temple worship, coming as it does from the ultimate authority of the Society, its founder. As one influential devotee wrote in another context as a “rule of thumb” for considering theological innovations within ISKCON, “If Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't clearly and definitely say it, and if it first came up after 1977, whatever it is, don't trust it” (Svāmī: 39, 70). Śivarāma Swami, though sympathetic to this spirit of caution, questions whether such distrust applies in all respects of rule observance in *arcanam*:

I guess conservatism is good in one sense. Over-liberalism, introducing things, concocting things could lead to dangers. Sometimes [devotees] are

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<sup>69</sup> This temple and *mūrti* was established by a Rādhāramaṇa goswami within the last century. Caitanya is sometimes portrayed with six arms, representing him as simultaneously Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, and Caitanya as *sannyāsī*, recalling his appearing in this form before Nityānanda (CC 1.17.13).

worried that I am doing that in Hungary. So it is good to be conservative. But it is hard for devotees to understand that what Śrīla Prabhupāda did in 1969 and what he wanted later is a different thing and that it is all right to change. (Śivarāma Swami 9-11-02)

In such specific matters as this, what Prabhupāda might have “wanted later,” i.e. after his demise, can only be surmised. In the absence of the charismatic founder, Prabhupāda, whose authority was unquestioned within ISKCON, even the minutest point of contention can become a conundrum, especially in matters concerning the *arcā-mūrti*, considered the central repository of charisma. As we noted in the previous chapter, the second-order notions of *hari-sevānukūlatā* and the *sāragrāhī-vaiṣṇava* were seen as able to “express, cultivate, and regulate [the] conditions of adequacy” of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava language and practice, and to establish the truth and felicity of the tradition’s first-order language and activity, even in conditions of such change as Kṛṣṇa having come to the West (Neville 2001c: 172-73). Yet here is a situation representative or “holographically” illustrative of ISKCON’s wider predicament, even where these two notions would find ISKCON-wide acceptance. As an international universalising mission closely interconnected by international travel and electronic communication, with a specific set of canonical texts translated and commented by the mission’s founder, there is a strong tendency and indeed a mandate from the founder to standardize at many levels of the institution, not least in the area of *mūrti-sevā*. On the other hand, the very nature of Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* urges viewing Kṛṣṇa in his particularity as divine reciprocator with individual devotees located in particular places and situations.

Manor devotees critical of the altering of *mūrtis*’ appearance expressed fears of “deviation” from Prabhupāda’s set standard and style of worship (Bala Gopāla Dāsī, interview, November 2001; Jyeṣṭhā Dāsī, interview, 9-11-02; Gadādhara Dāsa, interview, 18-8-03). In effect, to do so was thought to depart from the guru-specified *vidhi*, if not to blatantly disobey the Society’s founder, even if the intention had been “[t]o satisfy the Lord” (*hari-sevānukūlatā*). In this view, such activity within the realm of greatest sanctity, *arcanam*, threatened to draw the Society toward “*sahajiyism*,” or *apparent* devotional emotion (*rāga*) masking false and deceptive imitation (the *avidhi/virāga* quadrant of our map, the area of *aparādha*, offense). Conversely, for those residents of New Vraja Dhama who have participated in and welcomed the iconographic innovations, these have been done under the sanction of Prabhupāda’s

recognised GBC authority who, for his part, is seen as acting substantially as a *sāra-grāhī-vaiṣṇava*.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, they might argue, their intention has been in accord with the most basic rule of *vaidhī-sādhana*, “Viṣṇu should be remembered continually; he should never be forgotten. All other injunctions and prohibitions should be the servants of just these two.”<sup>71</sup>

Even though there are traditions of iconographic modification of Vaiṣṇava temple images in India for the purpose of recalling Kṛṣṇa’s varied pastimes in certain festivals, because it is something new to ISKCON, and because it was not explicitly introduced or sanctioned by Prabhupāda, it is controversial.<sup>72</sup> The controversy continues to rumble in the background of other, more pressing organisational matters, and in one or another form is likely to persist as a point of contention, an instance of the “inner conflict of tradition” Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas in the modern West must contend with as they negotiate a felicitous balance among maintenance, renewal and reform modes of their tradition. Yet controversy may also prove to become an indicator of healthy diversity, as a counterpoint to the drive for organisational uniformity, making space for authentic *rāga* which is not discordant with *vidhi* and the aims of the mission.

In this particular case, Bhaktivedanta Manor *pūjārī*s, after meeting with strong negative reactions from long-time community members to the one “experiment” on Govardhana-*pūjā* day, have resolved to desist from future modifications of the *mūrti*’s forms, while (at this writing) New Vraja Dhama continues to make temporary alterations on the *mūrti*’s on special occasions.<sup>73</sup> With a common devotional objective, the

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<sup>70</sup> This particular case is intriguing because the innovation in question at NVD was sanctioned by the present authority, Śivarāma Swami; in Prabhupāda’s letter, he enjoins strict following of temple authorities, which was being done in this case.

<sup>71</sup> HBV 3.37; BRS 1.2.8., translation Haberman. HBV quotes this verse from *Padma Purāna*, in the context of the necessity to remember Viṣṇu at the time of awakening. Rūpa quotes it to describe *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti*.

<sup>72</sup> One pragmatic argument given against modifying the images’ form is that it increases the danger of breakage. Most ISKCON Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa images are of marble, and there have already been cases of breakage due to carelessness. Damage to an image is, understandably, seen as a major offense to Kṛṣṇa, a sign of extreme inauspiciousness, and, according to Pāñcarātra texts, cause for replacing the image, a major ritual undertaking and disturbance for a worship community.

<sup>73</sup> Flair for variation mixed with caution, however, led on one recent occasion at the Manor to a mixed message in terms of *Rāma* narrative: Prior to *Rāma-navamī* (*Rāma*’s appearance celebration) in 2002, the head *pūjārī*, Gadādhara Dāsa, asked this author whether I thought it would be appropriate to portray *Sītā-Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa-Hanumān* in dress and hairstyle indicating *Rāma*’s forest exile, rather than in their usual royal *darbar*. Although he took my advice to the extent of *not* dressing them as ascetics (I pointed out that the *Rāmāyaṇa* narra-

Manor has opted for a greater degree of invariance in this matter, while New Vraja Dhama has opted for greater variance. Or, from a *bhakti* perspective of interpreting divine will, it could be said that Kṛṣṇa, as Gokulānanda in the Manor, is more conservative than Kṛṣṇa as Śyāmasundara in New Vraja Dhama. For Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas, Kṛṣṇa's inconceivable simultaneous oneness with and difference from each of his images would entirely allow for this explanation, such that Kṛṣṇa is seen as being as much locally situated as his devotees, responsive to local "prevailing social conditions." Thus the liturgical order would be seen as ultimately maintained by the ultimate object of worship.

What such a situation shows, however, is how delicate the balance among factors bringing efficaciousness in devotional practice—the set of felicity conditions deemed necessary for the truth of *bhakti* to thrive—are seen to be by practitioners. This delicacy is acute in the area of temple ritual and iconography, since the temple images are such an important locus of charisma and authority for several ISKCON communities—the very embodiments of ISKCON's ultimate sacred postulate. To what extent and in what ways the textual canon will prove felicitous in conjunction with the worship of images will be seen in the course of time. If the broader discourse of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism proves strong and resilient (Murphy 402, citing Roland Barthes), one can expect continued expansion of canon to appropriately "clothe" specific images of Kṛṣṇa (in whatever poses they may appear), especially in aesthetic modes such as poetry and song, the linguistic and musical vehicles of *rāga*.

At the beginning of this chapter we viewed the missionary expansion of ISKCON with the imagery of the *digvijaya*—the conquering of the quarters by Indian kings and ascetics. There we marked the 1973 London Jagannātha Rathayātrā as a high-point in Kṛṣṇa's westward move, followed by his consecration, with Rādhā, as Rādhā-Gokulānanda in Bhaktivedanta Manor. As we approach the conclusion of this study, we return to the theme of divine embodiment *located* in places considered holy. What was formerly known as Piggotts Manor became, because of *śrī-mūrti*'s presence, transformed into a place of worship associated, for its community, with Vrindavan, the land of Kṛṣṇa's divine play rather than of his divine power.

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tive never has the four figures *together* in the forest, and there would be no question of removing Hanumān from the altar), he could not resist having the shrine surrounding the *mūrtis* fashioned so as to portray the forest setting!

#### IV.4. MAKING MANY VRINDAVANS

One can read the iconographic innovations along with the reactions against them described in the previous section in terms of departure from and maintenance of *familiarity*, routine's close companion. For that matter, Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*'s entire venture West can be seen in these terms, as can the reverse move—of people to visit the newly established western Kṛṣṇa temples. Karen Prentiss argues that familiarity is a central theme in Indian pilgrimage, and here, as we begin to close the circle of this study by considering one western Kṛṣṇa temple in light of Kṛṣṇa's Vrindavan context, as a replication of it, we may also explore this notion. I indicated at the beginning of this chapter that Bhaktivedanta Manor has become a place of pilgrimage for Hindu Indians throughout the U.K. This is so, even though there are growing numbers of Hindu temples among urban concentrations of Hindu Indians. Therefore we ought to consider how the Manor functions as a destination or starting point for pilgrims, and how it relates to the Vrindavan prototype. The very non-canonical but important genre of advertising provides one way to view this topic. An excerpt from Bhaktivedanta Manor's recently printed information brochure tells prospective visitors what to expect:

Enter into the harmony of ancient spiritual traditions of Vaishnavism and the worship of Lord Krishna. Enjoy the rural surroundings of a Victorian country manor. Calm your senses with the sweet aroma of incense, chanting of Sanskrit mantras and the chimes of hand cymbals emanating from various areas of the manor. See the unique lifestyle of the resident devotees. Listen to and question Vaishnava practice and philosophy. Taste the simple vegetarian home-cooked delicacies. Enjoy, relax and find peace in the tranquil surroundings. The choice is yours—this will be a spiritual experience you will cherish and want to take home with you.<sup>74</sup>

These words might have fit well in a travel brochure from British colonial times. They suggest rewards for one's Manor visit not unlike those of a travel holiday—relief from the drudgery of the work-a-day world through entry into an enchantingly unfamiliar place. The brochure's readers can hope to find “the harmony of ancient spiritual traditions” ensconced in typical Victorian, i.e. imperial, English orderly life. The experience will be both calming to the senses and exotic, culminating in the savor of “simple vegetarian home-cooked delicacies.” All in all, one's visit will be positively memorable (gently unfamiliar), enduring (something one will

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<sup>74</sup> Quoted from *Bhaktivedanta Manor: A Spiritual Experience for Everyone* (no author or date).

“want to take home”), and safe (“choice” and the right to question being preserved, and “home,” twice mentioned, being never far away). This does not describe classical Indian pilgrimage—an arduous and dangerous journey by foot to face the unfamiliarity of unknown lands.<sup>75</sup> Nor does the Manor brochure offer the classical pilgrimage place: a holy river that provides nourishing and purifying power, and a *tīrtha*, or “crossing-over” place at the holy river where, “one launches out on the journey between heaven and earth.”<sup>76</sup> Indeed, the word “pilgrimage” is carefully avoided in the text. Still, if viewed in terms of *efficacy*, the Manor is portrayed as a viable and effective therapeutic pilgrimage goal,<sup>77</sup> affording the possibility of personal renewal through a non-threatening blend of the familiar with the unfamiliar, in a microcosm containing all elements efficacious for elevation.

The same brochure describes temple worship among several programmes maintained by the Manor community:

*The home of Lord Krishna:* The shrine is the heart of the community, since a temple is regarded as not only the house of God, but His home. The (Deities) [sic] sacred forms of Lord Krishna, known as *dieties* [sic], are worshipped to a very high standard; each day They are bathed, dressed and decorated with fresh clothes and flowers, and offered a variety of cooked food. Devotees and pilgrims congregate before the Deities and participate in the many ceremonies that are held throughout the day. The first ceremony is held at 4.30am [sic] (ibid.).

Again, enchanted homely comfort is emphasized, here portraying Lord Kṛṣṇa as the enjoyer thereof, the recipient of worship “to a very high standard.” Just as routine marks one’s home life, Kṛṣṇa’s day is one of routine; the difference here is the opportunity to feel a sense of participation in sacred (i.e. invariant) routine with many others. The brochure further describes the Manor as “. . . a God-centred community, which enables people from all walks of life to find peace, a sense of belonging and fellowship, spiritual fulfilment and a sense of purpose through living the simple precepts (i.e. specific rules) of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as taught by His Divine

<sup>75</sup> As expressed, for example, in a *Mahābhārata* eulogy of Puṣkara-tīrtha: “Puṣkara is hard to reach, austerities in Puṣkara are hard, gifts in Puṣkara are hard, to live there is very hard” (*The Mahābhārata*, vol. 2, books 2 and 3, ed. and trans. J. A. B. van Buitenen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 374. Quoted in Prentiss, 48.

<sup>76</sup> Diana Eck, “India’s Tīrthas: ‘Crossings’ in Sacred Geography,” *History of Religions* 20, no. 4 (1981): 324-29, cited by Prentiss, 47. Eck identifies a threefold image of efficacy associated with the *tīrtha*—the river’s expiatory power, its auspiciousness for launching forth toward heaven, and its microcosmic character.

<sup>77</sup> Claude Riviere (cited in Pechilis, 80, fn. 8) identifies three basic types of pilgrimage—therapeutic, commemorative, and initiation.

Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.” In other words, Bhaktivedanta Manor is to be seen as a holy place by virtue of its power to integrate. As Rappaport notes, the term “holy,” related etymologically with “whole,” indicates encompassment and integration (384). The dis-integration experienced in contemporary western life can be overcome in this one all-encompassing spiritual locale, a “rural retreat [that] serves as a window to Vrindavan, Lord Krishna’s eternal home” (ibid.).

This brochure tells something of how the Manor community wishes to present itself to the public, to attract a wide range of people, both Indian Hindus and westerners, open to a “spiritual experience.” The Manor’s popularity with Indians owes something to the pleasant blend of Hindu temple with British country living; no less, popularity and support comes from appreciation for the fulltime resident devotional practicing community focused on temple worship (interview, Akhandadi Das 30-7-03). But as we saw, Bhaktivedanta Manor is two temples in one, of *maryādā-puruṣottama* and *līlā-puruṣottama* linked by Gaura-Nitai. The spirit of this brochure seems to be more that of Sītā-Rāma worship than of Rādhā-Gokulānanda worship. As we noted, Sītā-Rāma tend to be associated with pious home comforts, whereas Rādhā-Gokulānanda are the lords of spiritual aspiration that goes far beyond peace and propriety, or related aims associated in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism with preliminary spirituality.

Vrindavan as conceived by devotees, the place of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, is hardly associated with peace; rather, it is the realm of unpredictable emotion, the “universe of feeling” governed by the *bhakti* logos. It is the forest, where *vidhi* is subsumed by *rāga*, and where *śaraṇāgati* leads to profound self-transformation, conveying one from *sādhana*- to *bhāva*- and finally to *prema-bhakti*, spiritual love beyond all traces of selfishly purposeful desire (Haberman 1994: 162-63). Rūpa Gosvāmī alerts Kṛṣṇa devotees entering the *vaidhī-sādhana* path that this way is perilous, unfamiliar. In his explanation of the sixtieth item of *vaidhī-sādhana*, namely cultivating “special love for serving the feet of the divine image,” (*śrī-mūrtir āngri-sevane prītiḥ*—BRS 1.2.225) Rūpa warns,

My dear friend, if you are indeed attached to your worldly friends, do not look at the smiling face of Lord Govinda as He stands on the bank of the Yamunā at Keśīghāṭa. Casting sidelong glances, He places His flute to His lips, which seem like newly blossomed twigs. His transcendental body, bending in three places, appears very bright in the moonlight. (BRS 1.2.239, quoted in CC 1.5.224, Prabhupāda’s translation)

Followers of Caitanya *long for* the “dangerous” condition in which Kṛṣṇa’s attractive features might divest one of worldly attractions. To be thus caught by Kṛṣṇa means that one is becoming an authentic embodiment of the truth of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, such that Kṛṣṇa, as the ultimate embodiment of truth, draws the worshipper to him by his irresistible qualities. To be vulnerable to such danger, and thus to enter Vrindavan, the practitioner is exhorted to first learn to see with eyes of devotion. As we have discussed, the learning process for such seeing takes place with the help of a complex fabric of texts, teachers, and practice tradition, wherein the first lesson is to question one’s identification of the self with the body. In the course of practice one aims to see all things as extraordinary, as related to the service of *śrī-mūrti*, and to its (his) divine abode, Vrindavan. In other words, one aims to make one’s way to Vrindavan, wherever one happens to be physically.

A pilgrim to present-day Vrindavan in India is, in one sense, *arrived* in that place understood to be the ultimate spiritual goal. Yet, according to David Haberman, Vrindavan differs from other pilgrimage goals in having no *point* of arrival; rather it is a place of wandering, a place of meandering alleys, full of the surprises and freedom comprising Kṛṣṇa’s non-stop *līlā* (1994: 68-69, 74). ISKCON, in trying to expand Vrindavan worldwide, in this sense is not without parallel to Vrindavan, only the space for wandering has been greatly expanded, into places largely unfamiliar with the cultural complex associated with Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*. Within Vrindavan, a temple such as Rādhāramaṇa acts as an arrival point, for here Kṛṣṇa rests and receives his routine of services that constitute the *familiar*. Bhaktivedanta Manor and other ISKCON temples may similarly be arrival points for pilgrims. But whereas Rādhāramaṇa may be a resting point for pilgrims on an onward journey to other temples and around Vraja within one or several days, Bhaktivedanta Manor attempts to be a familiar resting place *and* the journey to the unfamiliar, the realm of Kṛṣṇa *preman*, all in one.

To be all things—worldly and spiritual—to all visitors, residents, and wider community members, can hardly be expected of one isolated Kṛṣṇa temple such as Bhaktivedanta Manor. It is no wonder that Kṛṣṇa in his *mūrti* form continues to “replicate” and move about in the western world, making appearance in new or newly

reconstituting communities, or within individual homes.<sup>78</sup> As already mentioned, there has been a shift in Manor demographics from *āśrama* life to private households since the founder's demise. The same is true of ISKCON generally. As Tamal Krishna Goswami has observed, this change

has not necessarily been a move away from contemplative life. Instead, sacred space is increasingly defined in terms of the individual/familial rather than the communal/collective. Unable to worship daily at the temple due to work, and consequently with less institutional pressures, individuals are free to pursue their own perfection, which they now do most often in the context of family life.<sup>79</sup>

As Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* becomes privatized, there is a consequent move toward domestication, or “taming” of unpredictable divinity. But this may also be the sign of a healthy re-adjustment of the *vidhi/rāga* balance, whereby the *lateral* dimension of devotional reciprocation gains its proper place in relation to the *vertical* dimension of obligation due to reduced institutional pressure (O’Connell: 2000; Herzig and Valpey: 2004). Kṛṣṇa follows his devotees into their homes, where they “pursue their own perfection” by offering him services usually on a much simpler scale than in the temple, with less concern for the *vidhi* strictures associated with top-down temple organisation. In the domestic atmosphere devotees find their own ways of relating to *śrī-mūrti* that open them to the sense of divine reciprocation characterised in Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇavism by equality and intimacy. It would seem to have been in this spirit that Bhaktivinoda wrote in his *Śaraṇāgati* song (see III.1.3): “Goloka Vrindavan appears in my home whenever I see the worship and service of Lord Hari taking place there.” Thus the most familiar place, the devotees’ own home made into a Kṛṣṇa temple, is conceived as a sacred space. It is a holy place for integration and encompassment of the disparate elements in modern life, and for cultivating the intensity of devotional love described in *bhakti* texts.

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<sup>78</sup> Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism in the West is also no longer the exclusive domain of ISKCON. In the last ten years or more, increased international missionizing by various Gauḍīya Māṭha *sannyāsīs* and, since more recently, preachers from other Caitanyaite groups, has resulted in a more varied Caitanya Vaiṣṇava “marketplace” in the West. The movement of Kṛṣṇa *mūrtis* is also the result of missionary instability, as start-up temples open and close or relocate under the vicissitudes of economic, managerial, and related conditions.

<sup>79</sup> Herzig and Valpey (in press). This citation is from Tamal Krishna Goswami’s portion of our collaborative essay. He references Burke E. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985) and, Rochford, “Prabhupada Centennial Survey Report,” submitted to ISKCON’s Governing Body Commission (November 1998), and personal correspondence from Rochford to him on 27 August 2001.

Having concluded my research at Rādhāramaṇa temple in 2001 as I was about to depart from Vrindavan, Shrivatsa Goswami informed me of his plans to open a school for north Indian temple priests. “They are so ignorant!” he said, shaking his head in disgust. After explaining briefly some details of his plan for the training of *pūjārīs*, he smiled, motioning toward me: “and you are the inspiration for this plan!” (Interview, Shrivatsa Goswami, 24-11-01). The tenacious inquisitiveness of a western would-be Vaiṣṇava on details about his tradition’s sacred texts and worship practices had perhaps prodded him to become aware just how slack the priestly guardians of Kṛṣṇa worship in north India had become. Now that Kṛṣṇa has moved west, apparently to stay, increasing numbers of western *bhaktas* jet to Vrindavan to meander its alleys and visit its temples. They also contribute substantially to Vrindavan’s economy as avid shoppers for worship supplies and accoutrement in the now world famous Loi Bazaar. Yet some western *bhaktas* domicile in Vrindavan for weeks, months, or years. And in the hope of gaining greater authenticity in devotional practice, these long-term pilgrims increasingly remain to imbibe more deeply their adopted culture by learning Sanskrit and vernacular languages, Ayurvedic medicinal practice, devotional music, and *arcanam*. From this phenomenon has arisen an awareness that there is a demand for systematic education in traditional practices, not just for westerners but for Indians as well.

As ISKCON steps into the twenty-first century and out of its childhood and adolescent shoes, systematic education has become an increasingly prominent aim. Such temples as Rādhāramaṇa have the advantage of time and tradition in many matters related to Kṛṣṇa worship (most remarkable, perhaps, is the *samāj-gāyana* music tradition performed in this and other Vrindavan temples). Less apparent (though increasingly developing, at least partially from western influence) is the sense of missionary urgency western Caitanyaite culture shows. Bhaktivedanta Manor and other western Kṛṣṇa temples stand in a position to both learn and to teach and thus, if not to become everything for everyone, to provide an important foundation for the culture of “Kṛṣṇa consciousness” in the West.

## IV.5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have sketched the process of Kṛṣṇa's "migration" to the West through the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava missionary movement ISKCON from the late 1960's to the present, focusing on one major U.K. temple, Bhaktivedanta Manor, as a "hologram" for the mission's many temples and communities around the world. With the background of theological reflection on mission provided by chapter three, and chapter two's account of Rādhāramaṇa as an "embodied community" of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, it has been possible to view the images of Rādhā-Gokulānanda and the other images in the Manor with some depth of understanding. Likewise, it has been possible to view them in relation to the textual corpus outlined in chapter one, affording some awareness of how those texts "clothe" these images with devotional meaning and sustain their worship over time.

I have shown that Kṛṣṇa's moving and settling in the West has been rapid, but not always smooth. To be sure, the settling process from makeshift to more regulated worship happened quickly under Prabhupāda's direction, during which his authority was absolute for his followers even while it was "shared" with Kṛṣṇa in his *mūrtis*. After Prabhupāda's demise, the redistribution of charisma to some leading disciples proved partially unsuccessful, and an external challenge to the continuation of worship seemed to endanger the Manor's very existence. But Kṛṣṇa's *sevā* continued uninterrupted through those years of uncertainty. Both as a force for continuity within the Manor, and as the attractive centre of charisma, Rādhā-Gokulānanda have proven essential to the life of the community through its ongoing growth and changes.

Some of these changes have been reflected in changing iconography. The forms of Rādhā and Gokulānanda have "expanded" to appear as Sītā and Rāma and their associates Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān, embodying those aspects and aims of the community suggested by Bhaktivinoda's term *naimittika-dharma*. And Gaura-Nitai have taken position as embodiments of the community's missionizing, universalising thrust. Collectively, the several images (along with paintings on temple walls, and the life-size *mūrti* of Prabhupāda enthroned opposite the temple altar) bespeak the "embodied" character of the mission as well as the truth the mission propogates: To qualify for worshipping *śrī-mūrti*, devotees affirm divine form and embodiment while

denying the finality of one's own bodily identity and anticipating self-transformation. At the same time, devotees affirm the value of bodily existence as the means for devotional practice, to become embodiments of the truth of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*.

We have also seen ways in which continuity has been pursued in the short life of this community. Texts have helped support this aim, by virtue of the invariant character of liturgical order, especially once written, or by preserving what is thought to be the unchanging will of the mission's founder. The very existence of a canon upon which the worship practice is based proved instrumental in protecting the temple from outside legal threat.

But, I have suggested, canonical invariance can appear unresponsive to varied circumstances or individual needs, especially if there is lack of grounding in the pursuit of *rāga* and an overemphasis on institutional preservation. Put another way, *arcanam*, as the arena of rule observance, would seem to need to express and inspire *rāga* if institutional preservation is to succeed for ISKCON. I therefore hinted at the general difficulty for a missionary institution such as the Manor to fulfil all needs for deepened devotional practice, even though it may rightly aim to provide the goal of such practice as a "window to Vrindavan." Finally, I concluded this chapter by returning to Vrindavan to suggest a renewed sense of mission among Vrindavan temples, doubtless a response to interaction with western Vaiṣṇavas.

With the picture we now have of two temples—one an "embodied community" and the other a "missionizing-yet-partially-embodied tradition"—a more explicit comparison with respect to religious truth will be possible, following the themes and process of the Comparative Religious Ideas Project of Boston University. Venturing further, on the basis of this study it should also be possible to see how images can add an important dimension and enrichment to the notion of religious truth. This will be the focus of my concluding remarks.

## PART THREE: Images of Religious Truth

### Texts as Garments for Images

In the first chapter of this study we have seen several ways texts provide a basic vocabulary of meaning and practice, as a context within which temple images are understood and worshipped by Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. In terms of the three dimensions of liturgical order, on the hierarchical dimension, the core texts assert and defend the ultimate sacred postulate of Kṛṣṇa's supreme identity (and correlates, such as the identity of Rādhā, Caitanya, and individual souls). They also describe and thereby sustain a cosmological axiom—that the world is essentially dharmic, or governed by a multi-leveled hierarchical order of being which is supportive and also trumped by the superior order of the *bhakti* logos, a principle of relationality with divinity. To effect such relationality (and, in the process, self-transformation or divinization of practitioners), texts enjoin specific rules and practices, central to which are those relating to the establishment of worshipable images and the performance of a worship regimen by persons accepted as or made appropriately qualified. Especially on this level the sequential dimension of the liturgical order is expressed and detailed, since specific ritual actions precede and follow each other. Viewing the core texts as a composite, the narrative elements in these texts act to temper the injunctive elements, lending space for adjustment according to varied circumstances, and for some measure of creativity in devotional practice. At the same time narratives supply meanings, unifying a “multiplicity of significata embedded in one or more representations perceived simultaneously” (Rappaport: 236) into a sequence that affirms the *bhakti* logos.

I suggested the image of a garment for conceiving how these texts relate to *mūrtis*. As a garment clothes—both covering and making presentable and attractive—bodies of human beings in public, so these texts, woven of the two strands of *vidhi* and *rāga*, cover and present temple *mūrtis* with words that identify, protect, and relate them to a community of worshippers, bringing vitality to both worshipped and worshipper. In the second chapter we saw more specifically how this has been accomplished in one Vrindavan temple instance. As an “embodied community” the Rādhāramaṇa temple is quite self-consciously located in a brahmanical, textually Sanskritic place in the social map of Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇavism. This location finds ex-

emplification in the temple's founder, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, who also exemplifies intense devotion that induced Rādhāramaṇa to appear. As counterpoint to the structuredness of the temple's brahmanical character, the singular image of Rādhāramaṇa, Kṛṣṇa as the Dearly Beloved of Rādhā, bespeaks the nature of *bhakti* as a contestation of brahmanism's final authority, undermined by the supremacy of devotional feeling that is simultaneously and paradoxically something clandestine and removed from society, transcendent to the world, and something openly accessible to a viewing, worshipping public.

Of course the immediate community and wider worshipping public of Rādhāramaṇa temple is but one small fraction of a Hindu public, which is a (sizeable) fraction of a world population that modernity has aimed to address with its universalist message of human autonomy as the beginning point for discerning truth. The relatively closed character of the Rādhāramaṇa temple would suggest that it represents a relatively inaccessible, or limited, discourse on the nature, expression, and practice of truth. However, as Francis Clooney notes, Hindu communities of discourse on truth are not "content to adhere to a merely private communally circumscribed notion of truth" (Neville 2001c: 58). In Part Two we turned from the more restricted and contained "truth of embodiment" characterised by the Rādhāramaṇa community to consider how a different branch of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava family developed a missionizing and hence universalising orientation to religious truth as it pertains to *mūrti-sevā*. In the third chapter I showed how Caitanyaite preachers sought to articulate this universalism, calling for a reflective and selective approach to *śāstra* that privileged, to some extent, individual reason and experience. The ideal of appropriately guided self-reform was strongly advanced, structured in terms of *śaraṇāgati* principles and modeled after the heroic-devotee Arjuna of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. *Harināma-saṁkīrtanam* and *mūrti-sevā* should be the central practices bringing about such self-reform.

The textual discourse surveyed in chapter three led directly to the enactment of world mission forged initially by Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and continued by his followers and eventually by other Caitanyaite groups. In the fourth chapter I outlined this history from the perspective of temple and worship establishment with the analogy of the *digvijaya* conqueror, then focused on a single temple, Bhaktivedanta Manor near London, as a comparative counterpart to the Rādhāramaṇa temple of Vrindavan. Instead of a hereditary brahmanically situated community imbued

with the liminality of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, the Manor is the locus of a socially liminal hybridity (western converts and Indian migrants) working toward social establishment with a behaviorally brahmanical ethos where Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* tends to be shaped toward that end. A strong emphasis on *vidhi* centred on *mūrti-sevā* has accompanied the emphasis on mission, but it has also reflected the urge for ritual routine of a maturing householder community moderately concerned with material well-being. Here I encapsulated the Manor's location on the *vidhi/rāga* map with a verse recited daily in the morning worship. In declaring one's non-materiality as eternal servant of the master of the Vraja *gopīs*, this verse proclaims both a process of cultivating truth and that such truth is embodied in the object of worship. Finally, I raised the question to what extent the aim of self-reform can be adequately met in this context, where missionizing institutional aims are privileged over the cultivation of *rāga*, a dimension of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* that vitalizes practice and gives the tradition its special flavour.

### Divine Image, Image Worship, and Religious Truth

In the course of this study I have gathered data about a particular aspect—divine images and image worship—of one religious tradition originating in India and recently transplanted to the West. With a general aim of contributing to the understanding of this particular tradition and its use of images in devotional practice, I have placed two “moments” or instances of the tradition in juxtaposition to a third reference point, the abstract and vague concept “religious truth.” This concept can foster understanding in four ways. First, it serves as a basis for aiding in bringing the tradition into a wide public discourse where “religious truth” registers some sort of resonance within a broad range of worldviews. Second, it serves as a reference point from which to consider meaningful similarities and differences between the two instances of the tradition. A third way for increased understanding is in the category itself. That is to say, once the data has been sorted to see what it “says” about religious truth, the concept “religious truth” can be viewed to see how the data of this study may serve to enrich the concept. Fourth (a reverse of the previous), the broadness of the category serves to guard against restricting understanding of that category to the specific assumptions of the tradition (Neville 2001b: 200), thus opening the tradition to enrichment from beyond its own borders.

As Neville and Wildman have shown (ibid., 198-202), the third use of the comparative category involves a process of specification which is “not merely cataloguing phenomena under a category but translating the phenomena so that they do indeed give greater specificity to the category” (ibid., 199). To some extent I have done this, but also the reverse: Applying the Comparative Religious Ideas Project’s ready-made threefold specification of religious truth (epistemological, expressive, and embodied/cultivated truth) has been helpful for viewing the phenomena and articulating what the tradition has to say about the vague category. This threefold distinction has likewise aided in arguing for the legitimacy of considering *mūrti-sevā* in relation to religious truth by correcting the bias that sees verbal propositions as the exclusive realm of truth discourse. In this connection my choices of image worship from a theistic Hindu tradition and of an instance of it in the West as foci of study are germane, since the opposition of Kṛṣṇa worship in the West with modernity’s bias toward propositional truth is in this instance so stark.

One might argue that the project of comparing two instances of the same religious tradition with respect to such a broad category as religious truth has questionable value, since differences might register more clearly with respect to more specific categories. Indeed, there is much to be found in common between the Rādhāramaṇa temple and Bhaktivedanta Manor with respect to how practitioners in both communities might articulate understandings of religious truth. They share the same core texts and hence common understandings of an ultimate sacred postulate (they would agree that each community worships the same God); and they share relatively common understandings at more concrete levels of what would be counted as religious truth as opposed to error, deceit, or failure. Yet the difference in physical location—one temple in a north Indian pilgrimage centre, the other in a north-of-London suburb—is a significant one in view of the difference in cultural context.

We could consider the general difference between the two instances, with respect to religious truth, in absolute (and oversimplified) terms. That is to say, whereas Vrindavan is a place of cultural acceptance of the assumptions about religious truth represented by the Rādhāramaṇa community, the cultural location of Bhaktivedanta Manor represents a questioning of these assumptions, and indeed of the very possibility of religious, as opposed to ordinary truth, or truth grasped by ordinary means.

This brings us to consider more closely how “religious truth” might be construed, in three ways with reference to error, deceit, and failure as a unity (schematised in Figure 3 below). Distinguishing ordinary from religious truth serves to highlight the latter’s extraordinary, less openly accessible, character. In this study we have seen this sort of characterisation of religious truth in articulations of the need for special qualifications to approach, worship, or comprehend divinity—qualifications acquired, inherited, or both combined. This approach further suggested that religious truth could be considered valid, expressed, or embodied, where more or less specified “felicity conditions” were found present or consciously made present. The dimension of the tradition that concerns itself with *vidhi* in all its forms could be considered the explicit expression of this understanding. From this perspective, one might speak of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship as being “truly religious” when practitioners attend carefully to rules in such a way that they experience the extraordinary truth of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* as a result, prevailing over error, deceit, and failure (the three opposites to truth in Neville, et. al.’s scheme).

Recognizing the western origins of the notion “religious truth,” another way of construing it is by recourse to the etymology of “religion.” As theologian Ray Hart points out (39-41), this English noun has two verbal Latin roots with a common stem, *lig-* (*ligere, ligare*), that suggests “binding,” such as is found in the English noun obligation. In this classical sense of Roman civil religion, “religion means scrupulous attention to what claims and binds, to what holds us together (personally and socially) and obliges us to the source or sources of ultimate sponsorship in the world” (*ibid.*, 39). The Christian Fathers, especially Augustine, added a special sense by emphasizing the repetitive or changing character of ligation. In this sense “[r]eligion that does not stop religating involves a combination of binding and freeing, of the fixed and the variable, of the same and the different, of the one and the many” (*ibid.*, 40). From this perspective, religious truth is a truth that unfolds and is comprehended in the ongoing pursuit of religious practice as a whole, a pursuit which is “truly religious” when it effectively brings about such combinations of oppositions. In this construal, error, deceit, and failure are in a sense integrated into a dialectical process, giving impetus toward holistic religious expression and practice.

Regarding the tradition under scrutiny, this construal points to the dimension of it which, while acknowledging *vidhi*, constantly looks for the moment to let go of it, to reach beyond it, to catch the vital point expressed as or manifest in *rāga*. From

this perspective, “[r]eligion with real religating power is shot through with dialectic: it is at rest and restless, at home and homeless, bound and free” (ibid., 41), and hence “religious truth” is a truth centred in dynamic, dialectical tension. We have seen this sense of religious truth indicated in narratives having to do with exemplary devotees and their relationships to Kṛṣṇa. The charisma of these figures is largely a function of or shown in their enacting such combination, and likewise Kṛṣṇa, as *mūrti*, is seen to both enact and respond to such enactments. On a more concrete, historical level, we have also seen this construal of religious truth expressed as the intellectual and organizational striving to become a missionizing tradition that is “yet-partially-embodied.” Acts of maintenance, renewal and reform of tradition, as well as outgoing recruitment of young western followers, suggest this sense of religion in the letting-go of heredity-based tradition to engage Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* in the wider world, to “bind anew” (religate) a wider community of practitioners. Similarly in the efforts to preserve and sustain a temple in the face of outside opposition or internal disruptions, concerted efforts to hold to *mūrti-sevā* practices were accompanied by acts of institutional reassessment and reorganization.

In *bhakti* narratives, discourse, and even in ritual we have seen ways that religious truth might be specified in this dynamic sense of dialectic tension. Yet what I have dubbed the “*bhakti* logos,” the overarching principle of relationality with which Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism identifies and practitioners strive to realise, lends another sense to religious truth that calls attention to the emic term *līlā*, a close correlate principle of divine action. Associated with the notion of *play*, *līlā* also suggests *ease*—the accomplishment of something without strain, undue effort, or aim (Hawley 1995: 116). If devotional practice characterised by *vidhi* but informed by and aiming at *rāga* sustains dialectical tension, from a higher perspective it aims at unstrained, graceful participation in Kṛṣṇa’s divine *līlā*, which is joyfully unfolded in ever-new configurations of surprise and delight. To be “truly religious” in this sense is to facilitate, participate, or “play along with” the perfectly “aimless” divine player. *Divine participation* could, I suggest, be considered a specification of truth as embodiment. In the Caitanyaite tradition construing religious truth in this sense stretches its meaning to such an extent that, in the realm of divine *līlā*, felicity conditions are never wanting. Rather, every condition becomes impetus for the expansion of *līlā*. Indeed, in this

construal, even error, deceit and failure—normally the opposites of religious truth—can become ways that religious truth is upheld.<sup>1</sup>

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### Figure 3. Three Construals of Religious Truth

#### Religious truth as *conscious pursuit* of “felicity conditions.”

Emphasis on rules (*vidhi*) as means for establishing felicity conditions for truth of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*.

Hence emphasis on

Injunctive texts and invariance in ritual performance.

And/Or: Need for special qualifications to approach, worship, or comprehend divinity.

Thus avoiding error, deceit, and failure.

#### Religious truth as *religation*.

Emphasis on dialectic tension between apparent opposite principles in Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*.

Hence emphasis on

Narrative texts describing exemplary devotees and their actions as solutions to oppositions.

Mūrtis as enacting and responding to enactments of exemplary devotees.

Error, deceit, and failure are encountered, giving impetus toward *rāga*.

#### Religious truth as *līlā*, divine participation.

Emphasis on unstrained and unrestrained performance.

Hence emphasis on

“Aimless” or purposeless performance of devotional acts, participation in Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure.

The place of irony in discovery of religious truth: *Līlā* comprehends and incorporates “error,” “deceit,” and “failure.”

From this threefold construal of religious truth, the opposition of generally accepted versus generally contested assumptions about religious truth represented by the two locations of our two temples can be viewed again. It would seem that general acceptance, in the Rādhāramaṇa context, gives greater scope for the second and third construals of religious truth in the daily or festival functioning of the temple. In contrast, Bhaktivedanta Manor, situated in a context of general non-acceptance of Caitanyaite assumptions about religious truth, necessarily emphasizes the first construal of religious truth, especially in the matter of attention to injunctive practice.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, as Caitanya, the Lord “commits error” (e.g. mistaking one significant feature of nature for another, like the ocean for the river Yamunā or a sand dune for Govardhana [e.g. CC 3.18.26-28]); as Kṛṣṇa, the Lord is “deceitful” (e.g. stealing butter as a child, inducing anger and delight in the adult *gopīs* [BhP 10.9.6]); again, Kṛṣṇa exhibits “failure” (e.g. in failing to reciprocate the love of the *gopīs*, and admitting his “incapacity” to do so [BhP 10.32.22]).

This said, one could readily find counter-examples and instances in both temples that would show the limits of over-simplification.

This study of *mūrti-sevā* in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition concentrates on only one, albeit important, aspect of Caitanyaite devotional life. To view *mūrti-sevā* in that broader context is important, and some limited effort to show this has been attempted here. In the “bigger picture” of Caitanyaite Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, adepts (those who best embody the truth of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*) will view and serve *śrī-mūrti* in this spirit of *līlā*. In this study we saw indications of this understanding in both the embodied and missionizing instances or loci. In Rādhāramaṇa temple, the founder Gopāla Bhaṭṭa is viewed as an intimate associate of Kṛṣṇa and hence a transcendent participant in his *līlā*; priests regard their *sevā* as facilitating Rādhāramaṇa’s daily sports with his divine associates; narratives of appearance (of Rādhāramaṇa) and “disappearance” (of the priest who entered the sanctum too quickly) are framed in this understanding; and culinary, musical, and visual artistry is practiced as enhancement of Rādhāramaṇa’s “aimless” pleasure. On the missionizing side, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s discussion of adepts’ perception of the *mūrti* suggests this participatory construal of religious truth; the accomplishment of mission and the engagement of new recruits in *harināma* and *mūrti-sevā* are seen as participation in Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā* in his form as Caitanya; and festivals that focus on the *mūrti*, such as London’s Jagannātha Rathayātrā or the Manor’s Govardhana-pūjā, are seen as enhancing Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā*.

### Image, Truth, Play, and Līlā

Viewing religious truth in terms of the emic category *līlā* invites further exploration of broader issues related to the comparative study of religion, religious images, and notions of symbolism. In considering “play” as a category useful in the study of religion, Sam Gill notes that it can mean “a being at once of two minds or a holding at once of mutually exclusive positions” (Gill: 451). The primary exclusive positions are, first, that which characterises the modern (and postmodern, or late modern) study of religion, which, paradoxically, “lay[s] aside the role of discovering Truth” (ibid., 460), and second, that of the practitioner or practitioners of a religious tradition that makes specific truth claims and orients lives in terms of cultivating and embodying those truths. Gill argues that the academic study of religion shows a structurality akin to play, in that both involve an implicit framing declaration. “To

play is also in some sense to say, ‘this is play’” (454), and similarly the academic study of religion involves the meta-message, “this is academic not religious” (458). I would suggest that the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition (probably like many other Indic religious traditions) exhibits similar playful features more or less consciously acknowledged, and the notion of *līlā* is the emic term encapsulating these features. Further, I would suggest that this can serve as a point of convergence of understanding between two otherwise quite divergent spheres.

One place, perhaps in some ways the best place, to explore this point of convergence with reference to Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, would be the nature of physical, representational, ritually worshipped religious images. Why this is so may become apparent in what follows.

Joanne Waghorne has noted that in the twentieth-century western discovery of the “symbol” was a false expectation of a resolved dilemma. To such thinking

the dilemma of god’s seeming concrete reality was simply a false metaphysical issue. The real issue was not the nature of god but rather the nature of the *meaning* of god. *God* was to be understood as a kind of language by which humanity expressed its deepest concerns . . . The problem with this twentieth century two-step around concrete divinity is that it denied the possibility that devoted Hindus, themselves, ever actually thought that god had an embodied reality. It was assumed that in making an icon of god, the Hindu was simply making meaning. (Waghorne and Cutler: 5; emphasis in original)

She goes on to suggest that this failure to appropriately theorize concrete divinity in India remains a challenge to the study of religion. The present study attempts to partially address this challenge. As I observed in the Introduction, there seems to be no diminution of Hindu temple and image worship in India, and now it is being embraced by westerners as well. In this study, by engaging the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship tradition in a wider discourse of religious truth, I have attempted to explore how the divine image and its worship are understood in these terms. To make such an exploration is, minimally, to allow for the possibility that there is *some sort* of truth to what is believed to be the case—in this case, that in some sense ultimate reality is manifest in a particular concrete image, and that worship practices directed toward such an image connect the worshipper to that ultimate reality.

In both India and the West the tradition would largely, though not entirely, resist the notion that the truth of *śrī-mūrti* is essentially or properly understood within the rubric “symbolism.” The scholar Peter Bennett has articulated this sym-

bolism-resistant view with reference to the Puṣṭi Mārga (the Vaiṣṇava followers of Vallabha, closely akin to the Caitanyite tradition both historically and geographically). He argues that

In Puṣṭi Mārga . . . there is a sense in which the material image and supreme divinity are ultimately undifferentiated. To call the image a symbol in a Neoplatonic or Aristotelian sense would be to devalue its inherent sanctity. The symbol is metonymic rather than metaphoric. In a manner of speaking the symbol is that which it symbolizes. The divine image in Puṣṭi Mārga can be quite literally Krishna’s own form.” (Bennett: 114-116)

Such literalism finds expression in Caitanya Vaiṣṇava texts and in pronouncements of practitioners, such as we have seen in Bhaktivinoda’s portrayal of the adept viewer of *śrī-mūrti* (section III.1.4), the *ūcca adhikārī* who always perceives “the transcendental and conscious nature of the *mūrti*.” This is also the understanding of concrete divinity characterised in five ways by Roy Rappaport (discussed in ch. 3 Intro.). Yet the tradition does not settle for a one-sided literalist view. Again, Bhaktivinoda nuances literalism discursively in terms of *adhikāra-bhedatva*, distinctions of qualification in practitioners. There is also ritual expression of a nuanced understanding of the *mūrti*: The numerous possible offenses in image worship (*sevā-aparādhas*) are for the most part arguably less weighty than the possible offenses committed when chanting the divine names (*nāma-aparādha*), which are in turn arguably less weighty than to offend an adept Vaiṣṇava. And narrative expressions of complexity in the understanding of the *mūrti* are numerous in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition. Prominent among these are narratives wherein divine absence and the feelings associated with its experience (*vipralambha*, or *viraha*) are celebrated as serving or even constituting the height of devotion.<sup>2</sup> Kṛṣṇa is present in his *mūrti*, and he is less than completely present for the longing devotee.

To elaborate on this briefly, an interesting (and playful) Caitanyaite nuancing of the notion of divine presence in images comes in Sanātana Gosvāmī’s magnum opus, *Bṛhadbhāgavatāmṛta* (The Great Nectarean Essence of the *Bhāgavata Purāna*). To demonstrate the exalted nature of the Vrindavan *gopīs*’ pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa, in the final episode of the first (of two) parts, the cosmic sage Nārada is eye-witness to

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<sup>2</sup> Recall, for example, Mādhavendra Purī (section II.2.3) and his expedition to acquire sandalwood for his Gopāla *mūrti*. Although, according to CC, he felt the presence of Kṛṣṇa in the image enough to consider a dream his direct message, convincing him to undertake a difficult and dangerous journey on the Lord’s behalf, he is also remembered for uttering a prayer at the end of his life expressing the mood of divine absence (CC 3.8.35).

Kṛṣṇa's pining for them while he resides far away in Dvārakā City. To diffuse the intensity of his longing, the cosmic divinity Brahmā and Viṣṇu's carrier bird Garuḍa devise a scheme whereby Kṛṣṇa, by now in a swoon, is transported to nearby "Nava-Vrindavan" (New Vrindavan), a facsimile of the original village fashioned by Viśvakarmā, the cosmic architect. The village facsimile is replete with replicas (*pratimā*) of Vrindavan residents, whose statuesque unresponsiveness to Kṛṣṇa's sweet comments when he awakens does not make him suspicious since they (or rather their prototypes) had often been similarly stunned in his presence by ecstatic feelings. A situation comedy ensues culminating in Kṛṣṇa expressing confusion over his own identity as he catches sight of his city, Dvārakā, in the distance. "What is this? Where am I? Who am I?" (BṛBh 1.7.1-54).

Such a playful narrative about Kṛṣṇa's playfully intense devotional emotions shows how the "being at once of two minds" regarding the nature of divine images can be recognised within the Caitanyaite tradition, saying both "no" and "yes" to symbolism discourse. This both/and attitude says in effect that human encounter with a real divine can be direct in this world, by virtue of divine grace, *and* mediation—the employment of or encounter with appropriate or "true" symbols, is necessary or fitting, though they can lead to bewilderment, even of Kṛṣṇa himself. Indeed one is reminded of the pāñcarātric system of divine expansions and descents (including the *arcā-mūrti*) as a complex array of mediation between the world and transcendence that both sustains and dissolves the world/transcendence dichotomy.

## Limitations and Prospects

Robert Neville explores at length how religious symbols can be "true" in his book *The Truth of Broken Symbols*. In that study he pursues a non-reductive account of religious symbols, that is, an account which takes symbols as genuinely religious, or referring to God, rather than merely to moral, political, or psychological discourse (1996: xvi). A continuation of this present study could examine in detail just how the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava discourse, narrative, and ritual of image worship (possibly in more than one location, and as experienced by various practitioners) might be assessed in terms of such an analysis. This could be useful in two ways. As Neville notes, an "old purpose" that is nonetheless still valuable would be the practical one for practitioners to better master their own symbol system. Such analysis would fos-

ter the reflective metapraxis of *arcanam* that could vivify present-day Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition, challenging practitioners to be more conscious and articulate about how *arcanam* relates with their devotional lives.

A second “new purpose” noted by Neville for a study of *arcanam* as religious symbolic life is “as a hermeneutic entry for theology, that is, for attaining religious truth in critical, correctable ways” (1996: xii-xiii). Here Neville distinguishes between practical or devotional contexts and the context of theological pursuit of understanding, whereby “The first purpose of theology is to understand the divine” (ibid., 259). In Hindu traditions broadly, including Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, Vedānta has been the dominant formal mode of theological discourse, and ever since Yāmuna and Rāmānuja in the tenth century efforts have been made to conceptualise theistic *bhakti* in Vedāntic terms. The continuation of this tradition could possibly profit from the sort of systematic analysis offered by Neville, which could also open it to the wider theological discourse of the contemporary world.

In the present study I have attempted to give some idea how complex a consideration of religious images in a comparative study of religion can be. I have confined myself to the study of divine images and their worship in one of many possible theistic Hindu traditions, and within that tradition I have limited the study to two specific temples. The concentration on temple worship is also a limitation that sets aside both worship in homes of householders and worship by ascetics. Even within these two temple contexts, additional data might have been gathered, especially ethnographic data from individual practitioners that could have shed light on the difficult subject of ritual and devotional efficacy. Such data might have been analyzed in terms of age, gender, social position, frequency of temple visits, etc. A more comprehensive study, especially of the cultivation/embodiment dimension of religious truth in relation to image worship, would call for such data.

Another limitation concerned texts. I showed how the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and *Haribhaktivilāsa* form a “canonical” corpus that is both formative and normative for Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship in both temple instances. Yet the combination of these three, with their intertextuality among each other, proved already quite complex, what to speak of their relation to earlier texts. I also referred briefly and selectively to other, more recent texts. And there are numerous additional texts that deserve attention with reference to our topic but which I could not discuss here. Also, within the relatively narrow scope of this study, I have

attended to three overlapping textual dimensions—discursive, narrative, and ritual—to indicate further the complex nature of the theme.

Yet another “complication” in this study has been this author’s participatory position within the tradition, specifically the western missionizing aspect of it. While it is hoped that this position has not impaired, but rather enhanced scholarship, and although this study is conceived and executed within the academic discipline of religious studies, not as a platform for advocacy, the project has necessarily involved boundary crossing. The over-simplified “insider/outsider” dichotomy is, hopefully, challenged in this case, opening yet another potential basis for comparison, namely between the understanding of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava image worship tradition from varying positions of participation and non-participation.

As a study of religious truth in a Vaiṣṇava Hindu tradition my approach has been the obverse of that suggested by Francis Clooney in his exposition on Hindu approaches to religious truth in the Comparative Religious Ideas Project. As he rightly notes, it is advisable, because more publicly accessible, to begin from the level of epistemological discourse and the relationship of religious to ordinary truth. To do otherwise (by focusing on various scriptures, rites, and meditative practices) is to make the discovery of shared truth “more difficult, vague (in the bad sense), and liable to complete breakdown, a situation in which one becomes unable to say at all what ‘Hindus’ mean by religious truth” (Neville 2001c: 59). It may well be that this study clouds more than it clears understanding about what Hindus mean by religious truth, if generalization about Hindu religion is the aim. On the other hand what is gained is, I would suggest, a sense of religion’s particularity, as that which touches, motivates, and guides individuals and which sustains religious communities and institutions. In this regard the study of images and their worship is especially german due to their concrete particularity. By retaining interest and attention to both first and second order ideas about images and their worship, and associating these with the broad category “religious truth,” it is hoped that a balance has been made between particularity and generality.

Some comparisons of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism with other traditions have suggested themselves along the way of this study, one or two of which I have mentioned. A comparison of missionizing Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism with the Ramakrishna Mission with regard to image worship could be a useful one, in view of their oppositional Vedāntic perspectives yet common engagement in the West. Similarly, a more

comprehensive comparison than was done here of the former with the Brahma Samaj, the revisionist Hindu movement that repudiated image worship entirely, could be valuable. In terms of western Hindu-based movements, a comparison of Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇavism with the Satya Sai Baba movement could be illuminating, in view of its claims about the charismatic founder's identity as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu and/or Śiva and the extensive iconographic identifications employed by practitioners (see for example Bowen, chs. 3 and 4).

Comparisons further afield might be ventured between, for example, understandings within theistic Hindu traditions and Middle Asian religions regarding the use or non-use of images in worship. A case of particular interest to this author would be icon veneration and ideas about icon veneration in the Orthodox Christian tradition. How might a comparison of this tradition with, say, Caitanya Vaiṣṇava *mūrti-sevā*, be effectively conducted, doing justice to both traditions? Such comparisons would justify a collaborative approach similar to that conducted by the Comparative Religious Ideas Project.

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I began this study with a picture of the odd mix of East and West manifest in a recent Jagannātha *rathayātrā* procession through the streets of London, and raised the question what this signifies in terms of modernity. In a world characterised by the push and tug of cultures jostling for position and voice, significations become multiple, and single clear messages become difficult to discern. In this study of one such culture for which divinity is accessible in visible images, we have explored some of the parameters of thought and action that constitute that culture and give it coherence and viability for its practitioners. Certainly the tradition counters modernity's juggernaut-like mindset to "rule out the possibility of transcendence in principle." Rather it would seek to open the possibility of transcendence as something tangible, visible, and audible, with which human beings can participate and thus become perfected.

Encounters with transcendence such as practitioners of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism claim to have with *śrī-mūrti* can be understood in terms of what Paul Griffiths calls "religious reading" (40-45 and *passim*). As he observes, religious reading (which can include the "reading" of sculptured images) is to be contrasted with the consumer-oriented writing and reading that characterises contemporary academic writing and

reading. In the latter case the production and consumption of texts reflects the production/consumption culture generally, in which one supplies to and carries away from a text what is immediately required for some purpose, after which the book is no longer of value. The case is different with religious reading, whereby one is carried or even “consumed” by the work, such that one lives it deeply while living by it, ever returning to it for spiritual nourishment. Although in form this thesis belongs to the consumer text variety, it should have made clear that for practitioners *śrī-mūrti* is “read” religiously, not merely as a consumer who is (recalling David Smith’s comment at the beginning) “befuddle[d] . . . with fetishisms, with factitious, fabricated images” (Smith 2003: 23), the products of consumerism and its fast, unmanoeuvrable uncle, modernity. Practitioner-readers will therefore, when encountering *śrī-mūrti*, be “embraced” by it when viewing, contemplating, or remembering it. Such readers might rightly question my initial statement, that it was relatively easy to carry “Lady Subhadra” down the stairs of London’s Soho Street Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple, asking if, from the perspective of the *bhakti* logos, it would not be more accurate to say that *she* carried *me*.

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