

Politics and Religion in Eighteenth-Century North India

The Rise of Public Theology in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism



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ABSTRACT

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Despite the prolific authorship within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, it had not produced a single text that addresses the theological basis for engagement with public or social systems, nor any that offer guidance or insight into how a practitioner might behave or integrate into such environments. Nor have they in any substantial way referred to politically orientated texts such as the *Dharma-śāstras*. The tradition's most prominent texts relate instead to philosophical expositions on themes such as *bhakti rasa* or devotional aesthetic sentiments. However, in the early-eighteenth century, we notice an intriguing phenomenon, suddenly a series of works are fashioned to rationalize and promote a system of integration with the socio-political circumstances of their time. This fascinating period within Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava history witnesses the production of specialized treatises that provide theological foundations to endorse and encourage responsible public conduct grounded on notions such as *karma* and *varṇāśrama*.

This thesis adopts a two-fold approach, the close reading and examination of this new genre of Sanskrit based works, alongside reviewing the contemporary context these works emerge in. The political maneuverings of this historical era became a critical factor in invoking the production of these texts, and consequently these works reflect the interests and concerns of Jaisingh II, the ruler of a precolonial North Indian polity, the Kachvāhā dynasty. The texts were specific tools employed by the tradition to address the apparently contradictory mandate to reconcile responsible public engagement with the esoteric transcendent nature of *bhakti* practices, formulating a public theology which placed at its center *bhakti* practice. Through examining this innovation, I extract the perspectives from four critical figures in this period, king Jaisingh II, and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scholars Viśvanātha, Kṛṣṇadeva and Baladeva, enabling me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the exact nature of public theology for this tradition in this compelling era.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

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Despite the prolific authorship within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, it had not produced a single text that addresses the theological basis for engagement with public or social systems, nor any that offer guidance or insight into how a practitioner might behave or integrate into such environments. Nor have they produced commentaries upon or in any substantial way referred to politically orientated texts such as the *Dharma śāstras* or the *Manu Smṛti*. The tradition's most prominent texts relate instead to commentaries on the *Bhāgavata Purana*, biographies of Caitanya, and philosophical expositions on a range of topics and themes such as *bhakti rasa* or aesthetic devotional sentiment, none of which apply themselves categorically to the subject of public or social theology. However, in the early-eighteenth century, we notice a peculiar phenomenon, suddenly a series of works are fashioned to rationalize and promote a system of integration with the socio-political circumstances of their time. This fascinating period within Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava history witnesses the production of specialized treatises that provide theological foundations to endorse and encourage responsible public conduct grounded on notions such as *karma* and *varṇāśrama*.

This thesis adopts a two-fold approach, the close reading and examination of this new genre of Sanskrit based works, alongside reviewing the contemporary context these works appear in. The political maneuverings of this historical era became a critical factor in invoking the production of these texts, and consequently these works reflect the interests and concerns of Jaisingh II, the ruler of a precolonial North Indian polity, the Kachvāhā dynasty. The Kachvāhā clan preserved a special relation with the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect throughout the reign of the Mughal rulers in North India. The Kachvāhās were the first Rājput clan to form an alliance with the Mughal empire that ruled much of India for over three-hundred years (1526-1857). The Kachvāhā kings were vital contributors to the political maneuverings of North India, spanning from the Rāja Bhārmal (1498-1574) to Mānsingh (1550-1614), Akbar's close ally, to the appointment of Jaisingh II (1688-1743), whose reign commenced as the Mughal empire began to wane. Upon arriving in North India, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect set their sights on developing the place of Kṛṣṇa's birth and early activities, Vṛndavāna, and consequently some of the most important Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachers settled there in the sixteenth century. Even though Vṛndavāna had a long historical connection to Kṛṣṇa, prior to the sixteenth century, pilgrimage sites

pertaining to Kṛṣṇa did not dominate the area of Vṛndavāna. Hence, the saints that had arrived aimed to reestablish such pilgrimage sites, however they were not alone in their efforts and depended on the political support and patronage of the powers that governed the domain, consequently a remarkable coalition was formed between the Mughals, the Kachvāhās and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas which led to an initial period of prosperity in Vṛndavāna. The Kachvāhā dynasty developed a robust relationship with the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community mediated by the Govindadeva deity who became a symbol of Kachvāhā prestige and devotion in North India. The Mughal regime initially encourage and respected this relationship sanctioning regional centers of power to pursue their individual religious ambitions.

This remarkable situation led to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community adapting to the new socio-political and economic climate, consequently encountering fortunes as well as sorrows. Indeed, we notice a trend in this period, the stability of the Mughal-Kachvāhā coalition corresponded with the fortunes of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect. The reign of Akbar was a golden period for this coalition, symptomized by the elevation of Kachvāhā kings such as Mānsingh and Bhagavāndās in the Mughal administration. This enabled the Kachvāhās rulers to influence patronage and the allocation of resources, resulting in the extraordinary sponsorship of a grand temple for Govindadeva, showcasing Kachvāhā power and devotion in North India. As we proceed to the reigns of Shah Jahan and Jahangir, the Kachvāhā dynasty continued to fare well, although they didn't attain the same positional heights of that during the Akbar's rule. In this phase, the Kachvāhā clan were primarily represented by the feats of Jai Singh I whose long reign spanned both rulers, achieving significant accomplishments for both emperors. The patronage for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples of Vṛndāvana continued without reduction, indeed in some respects, grants were improved. Furthermore, administrative power of key temples were transferred to the jurisdiction of the Kachvāhā family, reflecting the strong bonds between the Kachvāhās and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples, endorsed by the Mughal regime. The demise of this three-party coalition transpires in the reign of the final major ruler of the Mughal regime, Aurangzeb. In this period, we witness an unprecedented event, an exodus of deities from the region of Vṛndāvana in response to the threat of devastation from Aurangzeb's armies. This episode seems to have been partially invoked by a breakdown in the Kachvāhā-Mughal alliance, caused by Mughal suspicions of treachery enacted by the Kachvāhās in the escape of Shivaji. Even in this period of turmoil, the Kachvāhās who had provided extensive care and service for the renowned Govindadeva deity of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, ensured a safe passage for the deity's escape. Govindadeva eventually settles in the new capital city of the Kachvāhā clan, Jaipur and becomes the state deity of Jaipur, initiating a new episode in Kachvāhā-Gaudiya relations, defined principally by the new Kachvāhā ruler, Jaisingh II.

The reign of Jaisingh II, which is considered the dynasty's apex, is renowned for its lavish patronage to a variety of religious institutions, elaborate religious reforms and a statewide drive

towards adopting orthodox practices. He labored extensively to configure his state upon the pillars of *dharma*, striving to legitimize his status as a Hindu ruler. To achieve his religious ambitions, he employed *brahmins* and scholars from various sects to contribute to his various projects. Many *brahmins* from various sects capitalized on the opportunity presented by the religious interests of the king, and enthusiastically participated in supporting the religious vision of the king, knowing that such efforts would result in increased patronage and influence. There was also a shift in the hierarchy of power for religious sects with the arrival of Vaiṣṇava deities within Jai Singh's domain. For instance, sects such as Ramanandis who had enjoyed a prominent position with the Kachvāhās in their homeland of Amer, had to adapt as Govindadeva was installed as the state deity of Jaipur. Consequently, these new developments generated a rivalry, with groups competing for the favor of the king. Hence, sects operated in a highly political world and could no longer abstain from negotiating with the political powers. Consequently, this period was characterized by a competitive atmosphere coupled with pressure to comply to universally agreed upon modes of conduct, which witnessed religious sects having to discipline and modify their theological positions and outward conduct to attain royal endorsement.

In this highly competitive period interwoven with widespread religious reformation, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community encountered various challenges, from being criticized over their support for the *parakīyā* doctrine, to discrepancies found in their *sampradāya* affiliation, to their lack of orthodox practices which was exhibited by schisms and illicit behavior generated by the followers of Rūpa Kavirāja. There were various responses by the royal courts and the orthodox faction of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect to these various confrontations. Escalated by concerns over the followers of Rūpa Kavirāja and their discordant practices, which eventually resulted in his works being banned, sects were obliged to theologially justify orthodox practices such as *karma* and ratify public responsibility. Thus, sects were pressured to respond to what was seen as the political and social necessities of the era, instigated by the political powers in Jaipur, and consequently they had to convey their *bhakti* practices in light of the conservative and orthodox guidelines ordained by the royal courts.

This reformatory phase witnessed Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect members generating novel works to facilitate the legitimization of *karma*, thus endorsing the public rituals and style of social engagement that became imperative in this era. Their novel textual contributions included works such as the *Karma-vivṛti* and *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, which presumably were formed from the dialogues and discussions responding to the concerns accentuated by the unorthodox practices prevalent in this period. These pieces served as critical reference works responding to the political pressures of the day. Consequently, they should not be mistaken to have been produced in isolation nor should their influence be underestimated. These texts had certainly been produced under the order of the king and were

deposited in the library of the city palace as references for the religious-political concerns, and were deployed as tools to implement the envisioned standards. This era also witnessed the first two commentaries on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* for the tradition, in quick succession, permitting a system of integration with the socio-political circumstances of their time. Such texts were also a divergence to the literary trajectory of the works generated by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition up to this point.

This period marked by such reforms, led to state-wide transformations impacting all sects operating within the king's domains. Consequently, this also inspired a similar new genre of literatures to the existing canons of other various sects such as the Puṣṭi *mārga* and the Ramānandis. Multiple sects came together to partake in this shared task instigated by the king who was striving for unification and standardization from the assortment of sects in his realm. Nevertheless, such reformatory processes also invoked rivalry amongst the sects as they endeavored for the favor of the king. Thus, Jaisingh's reign was a fascinating period characterized by intense religious reformation, standardization and competition, influencing and molding the trajectory of sects.

Through examining this new genre of works within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava canon, I extract the perspectives of four critical figures in this period, king Jaisingh II, and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scholars Kṛṣṇadeva, Viśvanātha and Baladeva, who all to varying degrees strive to accommodate worldly engagement within *bhakti* theology. The *Karma-vivṛti*, is a text produced by Kṛṣṇadeva, the king's chief paṇḍit and a renowned Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scholar, which promotes extensively *karma* by arguing for the compatibility of *karma* and *bhakti*, referring profusely to the authoritative writings of the foremost teachers of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, a work commissioned by Jaisingh II, investigates the ultimate obligation or jurisdiction of injunctions pertaining to *karma* and *varṇāśrama* for a *bhakti* practitioner, and at what point can or should *karma* be abandoned in light of this obligation. I also examine whether there is a consciously developed public theology or public responsibility other than adopting *karma* until one is qualified to abandon the practice. By examining notions such as *lokasāgraha* or the mandate to become an exemplar of orthodox conduct in the public arena for the sake of others, and in analyzing theological motivations for abiding and conforming to behavioral and moral norms, such principles provide theological rationalizations for conforming to orthodox practices governed by *karma* irrespective of one's advancement on the *bhakti* path. Furthermore, fascinatingly, both these two works, the *Karma-vivṛti* and the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, are primarily compilations of writings from the foremost predecessor teachers of the tradition, arranged ingeniously to endorse the positions of the authors. I also explore the tradition's very first *Bhagavad-Gīta* commentary, written by Viśvanātha Cakravartī, known as the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇi*, a Sanskrit commentary upon the *Gītā* which was followed in quick succession by the *Gīta-bhūṣaṇa* another commentary produced by his student Baladeva. These texts were also produced in this period of

political pressure, further demonstrating a literary trend to alleviate the tension between orthodox practices and the pursuit of a transcendent religion.

I demonstrate that this collection of works were specific tools employed by the tradition to address the apparently contradictory mandate to reconcile responsible public engagement with the esoteric transcendent nature of *bhakti* practices, formulating a public theology which placed at its center *bhakti* practice. These texts promote *karma* in a way that other works in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava canon had not, illustrating the compatibility of *karma* and *bhakti* practices, and encouraging public responsibility grounded on concepts such as *karma* and *varṇāśrama*. These works were efforts to discipline the exuberant *bhakti* practices in the realm through the promotion of unifying orthodox standards circulated by Jai Singh II and his court *brahmins*. Thus, although, all of the major works pertaining to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition prior to this point in history, had evaded tackling this matter directly, the socio-political scenario however in this era, invoked a shift in the literary trajectory of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, resulting in a concerted attempt to accommodate worldly engagement with *bhakti* theology as a consequence of Jaisingh seeking resources for governance.

List of Abbreviations

BP - Bhāgavata Purāṇa
HBV - Hari-bhakti-vilāsa
BS - Bhakti-Sandarbha
BRS - Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu
CC - Caitanya-caritāmṛta
BG - Bhagavad-Gītā

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INTRODUCTION

Research Contribution

The theological contribution of the early Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachers to the realm of public or social engagement appears to be virtually non-existent. Despite the early copious literary output of the tradition, it had not fashioned a single text to elucidate on the theological basis for engaging within public or social systems, nor offering guidance or insight into how a *bhakti* practitioner might behave or integrate into such environments. Nor had they in any substantial way referred to politically orientated or *karma* driven texts. Instead the tradition is celebrated for its depth of devotion to Kṛṣṇa, the playful deity of Vṛndavāna. They are also admired for explaining the aesthetics of *bhakti* as a concise sophisticated science. Consequently, the tradition's early literary contributions relate instead to elucidations on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, biographies of Caitanya, and expositions on areas such as *bhakti rasa* or devotional aesthetic sentiments, none of which apply themselves directly to the subject of public or social theology. Despite the lack of scholarship in the early phase of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition regarding the public and social obligations of a *bhakti* practitioner, suddenly in the early-eighteenth century with the emergence of Kachvāhā king Jaisingh II in North India, a series of works materialize striving to formulate a synergy between *bhakti* practice and a public theology.

The primary research question that this thesis addresses is what was the precise role of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology in relation to polity and public engagement during the reign of Jaisingh? In other words, employing traditional terminology, what was the relation of *karma* or *varṇāśrama* to *bhakti* in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology? This becomes a critical matter in this era as various Vaiṣṇava sects are forced to reexamine their relations with practices such as *karma* and *varṇāśrama*, this phenomenon is especially accentuated considering the lack of attention directed to the value of *karma* in the early formation of the tradition. In addressing this question, I also describe the historical context that compelled the tradition to compile works that sought to establish a theological foundation for responsible conduct in the public sphere. I delineate the challenges that the sect encountered in this era, the exact historical resources harnessed and the innovative strategies adopted which enabled Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava authors to offer scriptural legitimization for orthodox forms of public or social engagement. By examining and analyzing the works produced, I will highlight their remarkable ability to provide theological rationale for public engagement yet simultaneously permit even the highest levels of *bhakti* to be experienced. The authors accomplish this with

considerable dexterity and ingenuity, whilst confining their rhetorical strategies within the boundaries of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology.

The works produced cross disciplinary boundaries, for the texts bring into dialogue political or public concerns with theology. Thus, to fully appreciate these works, this thesis adopts an approach that smudges the boundaries between history, religion and politics. This endeavor aspires to interface the historical political context with religion, which perhaps in some circles are perceived to be incompatible. For instance, religionists may argue that religious matters transcend worldly maneuverings and thus should be studied independently of historical contexts. Nevertheless, such texts were not produced in isolation nor can we ignore the religious communities' relations with political powers influencing the production of these works, consequently the historical context becomes a vital consideration. Indeed, it is from the historical setting that we derive an understanding of the intent and purpose of the authors. Furthermore, considering that religion and politics co-existed in the early modern world, operating often closely together, as evidenced in the works that will be explored, this effort necessitates a multi-disciplinary approach.

Background

This thesis explores the ways in which the patronage activities of a major precolonial North Indian polity, the Kachvāhā dynasty, influenced the articulation of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect. The Kachvāhā dynasty were a powerful Rājput clan that contributed significantly to the development of North Indian politics in the early modern period. The Kachvāhās were the first Rājput clan to form an alliance with the Mughal empire that ruled much of India for over three-hundred years (1526-1857). The Kachvāhā kings were vital contributors to the political maneuverings of North India, spanning from the Rāja Bhārmal (1498-1574) to Mānsingh (1550-1614), Akbar's close ally, to the appointment of Jaisingh II (1688-1743), whose reign commenced as the Mughal empire began to wane. The early phase of the Mughal reign, witnessed Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal migrating and settling in Vṛndavāna, initiating a period of transformation in Vṛndavāna. The political powers of the day provided significant patronage to support the ambition and vision that these Vaiṣṇavas held. The patronage provided by the Kachvāhā rulers for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples and community is well known. The Kachvāhā clan held a long-standing relationship with the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples especially the renowned Govindadeva deity which became a symbol of Kachvāhā prestige in North India. The Mughals also played a crucial role, often permitting the regional centers of power to pursue their distinct religious ambitions, consequently the Mughal-Kachvāhā alliance critically contributed to the prosperity but

also the tribulations of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community in Vṛndavāna.

Jaisingh II became one of the most illustrious rulers of the Kachvāhā dynasty, surpassing the accolades of even renowned Kachvāhā kings such as Mānsingh and Jaisingh I. The pinnacle of his accomplishments entailed the construction of the city of Jaipur which was founded in 1726 named after the king himself, relocating from the previous capital of the Kachvāhās, Amer. The reign of Jaisingh II, which is considered the dynasty's apex, is renowned for its lavish patronage to a variety of religious institutions, elaborate religious reforms and a statewide drive towards adopting orthodox practices. The state generosity stimulated sects such as the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas to pursue specific kinds of intellectual projects as well as prompting collaborative endeavors and triggering rivalries between various sects. Indeed, numerous religious groups which depended and flourished on royal patronage and support, conformed to the king's wishes which had been configured as a consequence of the debates and discussions in the Jaipur courts. Consequently, communities that desired to be recipients of royal patronage and endorsement adapted to the political pressures, those that didn't were in some instances censured. This effort was instigated by the king to support his aspiration to construct his statecraft upon the foundations of orthodox *dharma*, imitating the Hindu kings of yore. Therefore, Jaisingh's reign was characterized by intense development both politically and religiously, consolidating the empire's holdings in the new capital city of Jaipur. His influence and jurisdiction extended beyond Jaipur to even Vṛndavāna, where he served as governor.

Jaisingh II's reign is an ideal vantage point from which to observe the vibrant exchanges between a sect, the Jaipur courts, and the king himself in this era. Pressures were placed upon religious sects to submit to the reforms delineated by the standards configured from the dialogues within the Jaipur courts, which had been induced by the religiously concerned king. The king also became increasingly dependent on the endorsement of sect leaders to legitimize aspects of his statecraft and affirm the divine foundation of his sovereignty. Consequently, during this phase of Kachvāhā rule, we witness significant intellectual contributions from key religious figures of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect such as Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya and Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa who both responded to the political pressures permeating this period. The case of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachers such as Kṛṣṇadeva, who is appointed Jaisingh's chief religious aide, also illustrates that much wealth and stature could be attained from aligning with the Kachvāhā kingship, which was generous in its dealings with religious elites and their institutions.

Vaiṣṇava sects were now obliged to convey their *bhakti* practices in light of the conservative and orthodox guidelines ordained by the royal courts. Thus, sects were forced to reconfigure their

positions on notions of *karma* and *varṇāśrama*, compelled to adjust their theological presentations regarding public engagement to satisfy the stipulations of the king. The multifaceted role played by sects and in consideration of their increasing socio-political prominence in Jaipur impacted the intellectual production of these religious institutions. This inspired new genres of literature to the existing literary canons of various sects. Indeed, several novel works were produced by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition which addressed the prevailing concerns, fashioned to rationalize and promote a system of integration with the socio-political circumstances of their time. Such texts were an innovation to the trend of works produced by the tradition. These works also reveal the precise nature of the pressures encountered in this era, deeming it crucial for teachers to endorse and encourage responsible public conduct, thus, attempts to tame the practice of *bhakti*. Such demands were encountered not only by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect but by all religious communities within the Kachvāhā domains, subsequently we also witness groups such as the Puṣṭi *mārga* and the Ramānandis responding to similar concerns. As various sects took up this shared task we also notice that Kachvāhā endorsement encouraged on some level a shared religious outlook, nevertheless such reformations also simultaneously stimulated competition and rivalry as factions strived to highlight their superior positions. Indeed, the most intense sectarian rivalry was often observed between those very sects that were the greatest recipients of royal patronage. As sects were dependent on royal resources it was essential for sect leaders to form close ties with Jaisingh and subsequently they were compelled to be active participants in the religious schemes of the king. Thus, Jaisingh's reign was a fascinating period of intense religious reformation, which influenced the literary trajectory of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas as a case in the early modern era.

Methodology

The primary method of research for this thesis is text-historical, entailing a two-fold approach, the close reading and examination of Sanskrit primary sources including some from manuscript collections, combined with an exploration of the key themes in these works in light of the wider contemporary political context. The works I examine are primarily manuscripts sourced from Mahārāja Savai Mansingh II's museum in Jaipur. The manuscripts feature in the *Khasmohor* collection in the *Pothikhāna* of Jaipur. The *Khasmohor* collection comprises of approximately eight-thousand works, some amassed and some anew, composed throughout the reigns of the numerous Kachvāhā kings. The collection grew steadily over the centuries and reflects the remarkable literary production

and passions of the rulers. The manuscripts examined in this thesis, the *Karma-vivṛti*¹ and the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*², both expositions on *karma-bhakti* relations were configured during the rule of Jaisingh II. As well as inheriting numerous collections from his predecessors, Jaisingh was also credited with having contributed tremendously to the collection, amassing manuscripts and commissioning novel works formulated by *brahmins* employed at the courts. This royal collection remained under *Khasmohor* or the personal seal of the ruler and were not widely circulated, but nevertheless served as critical reference works reflecting the debates and discussions of this period.³

By delineating the historical setting that provides the backdrop for this dynamic interaction of royal and religious institutions, I offer an insight into the motivations of the authors which reflected the interests and concerns of kings like Jaisingh II. Thus, by tracing the extensive vibrant relations between the Kachvāhā rulers and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, I highlight how the political authorities influenced the self-representation of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect. This multi-faceted approach of engaging in close readings of manuscripts, alongside depicting the political landscape that these works were generated in, enable me to provide a comprehensive and original contribution to the discourse on religion's role in the public domain in the early modern period.

The first two chapters of my thesis are historical narratives derived primarily from secondary literatures, illustrate the extensive relations between the Kachvāhā and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. The first chapter documents the renowned Mughal-Kachvāhā alliance, beginning with Rāja Bhārmal and Akbar, and concluding with Jaisingh II in the reign of Aurangzeb. Whilst outlining the Mughal-

¹ The *Karma-vivṛti* that I refer to and translate is derived from an edited Sanskrit manuscript from Monika Horstmann's German book *Der Zusammenhalt der Welt* (p.218-290), originally sourced from the Mansingh Museum in the City Palace of Jaipur. [Horstmann, Monika. *Der Zusammenhalt der Welt*, (Wiesbaden. 2009)] (Monika Horstmann has translated the text into German, however this is the first time that major segments of the work are translated and analyzed in the English medium.)

² The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* was procured from the City Palace library in Jaipur with the kind aid of Dr Giles Tillotson, the Consultant Director of the City Palace Museum in Jaipur and the permission of the Royal Family. There is only a single copy of this manuscript. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, which has never been edited nor translated, was in places not legible due to the scribe's handwriting, so required cross referencing to works feature in the compilation.

³ Bahura, Gopal Narayan. *Literary Heritage of the Rulers of Amber and Jaipur: With an Index to the Register of Manuscripts in the Pothikhana of Jaipur*, Maharaja Savai Man Singh II, (Jaipur, 1976), p.20

Kachvāhā alliance I examine the Kachvāhā patronage for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community in Vṛndavāna. I also explore the successes and failures of this new-found Mughal-Kachvāhā coalition as rulers of the respective dynasties changed, and determine how the robustness of the Mughal-Kachvāhā coalition corresponded with the fortunes and tribulations of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples, especially the Govindadeva temple in Vṛndavāna. In other words, I investigate to what extent political stability and support impacted the prosperity of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples in Vṛndavāna.

Having delineated the extensive relations between the Kachvāhās and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, in chapter two the narrative shifts to the new residence of Govindadeva, Jaipur, where I elaborate on Kachvāhā king Jaisingh II's reign. The demise of the Mughals and the rise of Jaisingh II marks the commencement of a new phase of relations between the Kachvāhā rulers and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Although Jaisingh's early reign was troubled by political upheavals, he went on to consolidate Kachvāhā power in an exceptional way, making him perhaps the greatest ever Kachvāhā ruler. His efforts climaxed in the construction of a new Kachvāhā city, Jaipur, that showcased the revived and rising Kachvāhā power in North India. The period administered by Jaisingh II was rife with public religious debates and discussions inspired by the religiously engrossed king. He enlisted scholars and *brahmins*, to legitimize his endeavors to configure his statecraft upon the underpinnings of *dharma*. Thus, I explore Jaisingh II's multiple roles as a monarch and sovereign, as well as an intellectual and religious administrator. Jaisingh's era was also marked by a greater scrutiny upon sects, resulting in demands to reform and adhere to requirements born from the Jaipur courts. Consequently, in this period, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community encountered numerous challenges, for instance, they were pressured over their positions on the *svakīyā* doctrine and *parakīyā* doctrine, criticized for discrepancies in their *sampradāya* affiliation claims and also consumed by conflicts over their views on *bhakti* and orthodox practices, invoking for instance, schisms generated by the followers of Rūpa Kavirāja. Such points of contention compelled the orthodox faction of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect to fashion works that provided clarifications on critical matters relating to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology. Subsequently, texts such as *Karma-vivṛti* and *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* are composed in response to the contentious issues. This era also ushers in the first *Gītā* commentaries for the tradition perhaps also as a consequence of the politico-religious pressures of the day. Chapter two therefore provides an overview of the religious concerns and controversies engulfing the reign of Jaisingh II and also illustrates the context for the emergence of a new genre of works for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect.

The remaining chapters are an examination and analysis of these novel specialized works. In

the third chapter, I examine the *Karma-vivṛti*, an exposition on *karma*. This text is produced by Kṛṣṇadeva, the king's chief paṇḍit and a renowned Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scholar, and promotes *karma* extensively by arguing for the compatibility of *karma* and *bhakti*, referring profusely to authoritative writings to substantiate claims. The following chapter examines the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, a work commissioned by Jaisingh II. This work investigates the ultimate obligation or jurisdiction of injunctions pertaining to *karma* and *varṇāśrama* for a *bhakti* practitioner and at what point can or should *karma* be abandoned in light of this obligation. In the course of analyzing these works, I also examine whether there is a developed public theology or public responsibility other than adopting *karma* until one is qualified to abandon the practice. I accomplish this by examining notions such as *lokasaṅgraha* or the responsibility to become an exemplar of orthodox conduct in the public arena for the sake of others, and highlighting theological motivations for abiding and conforming to behavioral and moral norms, irrespective of one's standard of *bhakti* practice as presented in these works. Fascinatingly, both these works, the *Karma-vivṛti* and the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, are primarily compilations of writings from the foremost predecessor teachers of the tradition, arranged ingeniously to endorse the viewpoints of the authors. The final chapter examines the first two Sanskrit commentaries on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava authors within the sect, which intriguingly appear in quick succession in this era. It is the first time we observe the *Gītā* receiving significant attention from the tradition, firstly from Viśvanātha Cakravartī who compiled the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇi*, his commentary upon the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and subsequently his student Baladeva Vidyabhusana wrote the *Gīta-bhusana*, his own unique stand on the *Gītā*. Both possibly produced as a consequence of the political pressures in Jaipur. Thus, I provide a comprehensive insight into Viśvanātha and Baladeva's positions on *karma-bhakti* relations, and notions such as *lokasaṅgraha* according to their *Gītā* commentaries. Therefore, through this method I convey the perspectives of four significant voices in this era, Jaisingh II, Kṛṣṇadeva, Viśvanātha and Baladeva on the precise relations between *karma* and *bhakti* within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, and subsequently gain a comprehensive understanding of the exact nature of public theology for this tradition in this compelling era.

CHAPTER 1 – The Mughals, Kachvāhās and the Gauḍīya

Vaiṣṇavas

Introduction

In the sixteenth century, Vṛndāvana became a center of focus for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, visible with the migration of key teachers of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect into Vṛndāvana. They arrived in order to fulfil the ambitions of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya¹ in reestablishing the pilgrimage sites relating to Kṛṣṇa’s activities in Vṛndāvana.² This endeavor was led by teachers such as Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī who had relocated to Vṛndāvana. It is worth considering that Caitanya did not direct other associates to Vṛndāvana for this task, who were perhaps considered closer but selected associates who had experience engaging with political figures and power. Rūpa and Sanātana had previously held senior standings within the administration of Sultan Hussain Shah of Bengal. Furthermore, Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, was the son of wealthy landowners and Jīva Gosvāmī, the nephew of Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī became responsible for purchasing land in Vṛndāvana to establish important pilgrimage sites.³ Indeed, Vṛndāvana was thrust into the religious landscape of North India especially considering that preceding the arrival of the Vaiṣṇava reformers⁴, such places of pilgrimage relating to Kṛṣṇa’s activities had almost disappeared.⁵

Prior to this period there appears to have been a scarcity of awareness of Kṛṣṇa’s connection to the area, although there existed *purāṇic* tales relating to sites of pilgrimage associated with this region. Indeed, in the first century BC and AD from excavations there is evidence of Nāga and Yakṣa cults, and even Buddhist and Jain artefacts within the Mathurā district spanning until the Gupta Era. In the Gupta Age *brahminical* icons and the first Kṛṣṇa-Gopal images appear. However, neither the inscriptional nor textual evidence indicates the

¹ Caitanya (1486-1534) is a Bengal Brahmin turned ascetic, whose followers accept him to be divine, and is considered the founder of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school.

² Dimock, Edward C; Stewart, Tony K, *Caitanya caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja* (Cambridge, 1999), p.611 (CC 2.19 in Śloka 1) and p.618 (CC 2.19.108) [All references to Caitanya caritāmṛta will be from Edward Dimock and Tony Stewart’s edition going forward]

³ Tarapada Mukherjee, and Irfan Habib, “*Land Rights in the reign of Akbar*”, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress (Gorakhpur, 1989), p. 237

⁴ Which also included other Vaiṣṇava groups such as the Vallabha tradition.

⁵ John Stratton Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, (Massachusetts, 2015), p.150

prominence of Vaiṣṇava practices during the Gupta period.⁶ Furthermore, Mathurā's history is also obscure, perhaps magnified by the numerous attacks that Mathurā encountered. For instance, Mahmud of Ghazni raided the city for twenty days in 1017 AD. It is through Mahmud's travel reports that we garner an insight into the splendid architecture previously found in Mathurā. In a record of Mahmud's seventh excursion when he visits the area in 1017, Al 'Utbi reports Mahmud's admiration for the beauty of the Mathurā fort, its central temple and wealth.⁷ Most of the treasures in Mathurā were looted during raids by Mahmud, including numerous silver and gold deities. Similarly, in the late fifteenth century Sultan Sikander Lodi also plundered the city resulting in the destruction of temples and shrines.⁸ Indeed, it is only in the beginning of the sixteenth century that Mathurā emerges as a place of pilgrimage for Kṛṣṇa consisting of temples related to various Vaiṣṇava sects. Therefore, local traditions and Vaiṣṇava sectarian texts suggest that the pilgrimage places of Kṛṣṇa were all but lost before renowned Vaiṣṇava reformers like Caitanya and Vallabha arrived in Vṛndāvana who each have their respective narratives within their traditions of how they initiated the rediscover of Vṛndāvana.⁹

The rebuilding and transformation of Vṛndāvana from an apparent jungle and its establishment as a place of pilgrimage centered around Kṛṣṇa, was due not only to the tireless efforts of the Vaiṣṇavas who travelled and settled in Vṛndāvana but also due to the significant political maneuverings and partnerships arising at the time. In particular, the celebrated Kachvāhā dynasty and its alliance with the Mughal empire played a crucial role in the dramatic developments witnessed in Vṛndāvana. After the demise of the Delhi Sultanate with Ibrahim Lodi's defeat by Babur in 1526, the Mughal emperors ruled India for over three-hundred years, concluding with the downfall and imprisonment of Bahadur Shah Zafar by the British in 1857. The Mughal regimes alliances with the Kachvāhā kings featured significantly in their success, this was even acknowledged by ostensibly anti-Hindu figures. For instance, a mullah Badayuni commended the campaign against Rana Pratap led by Kachvāhā king Mānsingh describing him as 'a Hindu who wields the sword of Islam'.¹⁰ During the Mughal era many other such battles were fought in partnership with Rājput allies such as the Kachvāhās. This alliance, as well as having an impact on the political fortunes of the Mughals, also proved to be pivotal in

⁶ Charlotte Vaudeville, *Myths, saints, and legends in medieval India*, (Bombay, 1996), p.47

⁷ Heidi Pauwels, "A tale of two temples: Mathurā's Keśavadeva and Orcchā's Caturbhujadeva" in Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook Ed., *Religious cultures in Early Modern India*, (London, 2012) p.148

⁸ Entwistle, Alan W. *Braj, Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage*, (Groningen, 1987), p.134

⁹ Vaudeville, *Myths, saints, and legends in medieval India*, p.53

¹⁰ Satish Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, (New Delhi, 1993), p.28

determining the joys and sorrows of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition in Vṛndāvana which will be examined in this chapter. However, before I examine the alliance between the Mughal and the Kachvāhā rulers, and the subsequent impact this had on the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava fortunes in Vṛndāvana, I will briefly describe the political transformations that manifested in North India prior to the arrival of the Mughal ruler Akbar. Thus, this chapter will provide us the historical context for the specific developments that emerge in the eighteenth century in the realm of politics and religion in Northern India.

The Delhi Sultanate

Prior to the Mughal empire, the Sultanate¹¹ endured for over three centuries under the helm of five major dynasties, signaling the end of the ruling regional Hindu kingdoms in Northern India. The dominion and influence of the Sultanate would penetrate ever deeper into the Indian subcontinent under the direction of these five dynasties. However, it was not until the downfall of the Delhi Sultanate and the emergence of the Mughal empire that most of India would eventually submit to a single ruler. The first of the five Sultanate dynasties was the pioneering Mamluk dynasty, founded by the slave of Muhammad of Ghor,¹² Qutbal-Din Aybeg.¹³ The Mamluk dynasty would be succeeded in 1290 by the Khilji dynasty that resisted numerous Mongol invasions in India.¹⁴ However, the Tughlaq Dynasty assumed power only 30 years later, and ruthlessly extended its dominance into much of the southern regions of the Indian subcontinent.¹⁵ In 1398 the relentless attacks of the Central Asian conqueror, Timur, left the Sultanate in dismay, consequently the leadership was swiftly taken up by the Sayyids. However, the Sayyid Dynasty due to frail governance was not destined to rule for long and by 1451 Bahlul Khan Lodi of the Pashtun Dynasty assumed control of the Delhi Sultanate¹⁶. The Lodi Dynasty recovered the prestige of the Delhi Sultanate and retained control for longer than its predecessor but was nevertheless overthrown by the superior strategic maneuvers of Babur, the first Mughal emperor, whose forces broke the extensive armies of the Lodi Dynasty in the Battle of Panipat in 1526 and killed the then Sultan Ibrahim Lodi.¹⁷ Babur however did not intend to follow in the footsteps of the previous Delhi Sultans and instead formulated a much

¹¹ The regions ruled by the Sultans or 'rulers' were known as the Sultanate.

¹² Sultan of the Ghurid Empire

¹³ Peter A Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, (Cambridge, 1999), p.27

¹⁴ Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p.44

¹⁵ Romila Thapar, *The Penguin history of early India*, (London, 2003) p.275

¹⁶ Thapar, *The Penguin history of early India*, p.288

¹⁷ Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p.324

more ambitious plan that exceeded the achievements of the Delhi Sultanate and eventually achieved what the Sultanate never did, political dominion throughout India. The downfall of the Lodi Dynasty in the early sixteenth century therefore heralded the departure of the Delhi Sultanate and the rise of a vastly more expansive force in the history of Indian politics, the Mughal empire.

Babur, the first Mughal ruler's story begins in Central Asia, he is thought to have descended from Genghis Khan as well as Timur, two renowned Mongol world conquerors.¹⁸ His victory during the battle of Panipat rewarded Babur with the beginnings of an empire, achieving dominion over the cities of Delhi and Agra. Following his victory against the Lodi dynasty, the last of the Delhi Sultanates, utilizing similar strategies he succeeded in thwarting the subsequent challenge from the Rājputs at the battle of Khanua in 1527.¹⁹ In the succeeding years Babur successfully extended his territory across most of North India. However, despite Babur's successes and conquests, his control over Northern India remained fragile and in 1530 after governing the territory he had assimilated, for only four years, he died. Babur's son Humayun strove to preserve control over his father's territories, however in 1540 he was forced out of India by Afghan Suri ruler Sher Shah Sur. With Persian help Humayun managed to recapture Lahore and Delhi in 1555, but died shortly thereafter having fallen from the steep steps of his library.²⁰ Thus, the scene is set for the introduction of his young son Akbar, who at only the tender age of twelve took charge of the realm. His reign endured for almost fifty years from 1556 to 1605 and was characterized by the rapid expansion of the Mughal empire into one of the largest ever in Indian history.²¹

Historical origins of the Kachvāhā dynasty

The celebrated empire of the Mughals was not built alone, relying substantially on strategic alliances. The alliance formed with the Kachvāhā dynasty in particular, played an imperative role in the political developments of North India. The Kachvāhās were also pivotal in supporting the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect establish their roots in Vṛndāvana, transforming the location into the headquarters for the community in North India. Before we examine the specific ways in which they impacted North India I will present a brief synopsis of their historical roots. Traditional views concerning the historical background of the Kachvāhā dynasty posit that their lineage stems from Kush, the son of Rāma, whose life is celebrated in the epic Rāmāyaṇa. The

¹⁸ Moin, A.Azfar, *The millennial sovereign*, (New York, 2012), p.21

¹⁹ Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot. *India Before Europe*, (Cambridge, 2006) p.116

²⁰ Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, p.123

²¹ Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, p.124

Maharanas of Mewar or Udaipur and their clansmen the Sisodias, likewise assert ancestry from Lava, the brother of Kush.²² The early Kachvāhās had supplanted the previous territorial nobles, consequently their first stronghold had been Dausa, to the West of Jaipur. From there they expanded to Amer,²³ where they built a fortified base and subsequently a palace.²⁴ With the entrance of the Mughals into India's history, historical records concerning the Kachvāhās evolve from oral accounts to more official mediums.²⁵ In the dawn of the Mughal era, between 1503 to 1527 the first Kachvāhā ruler is Pṛthvīrāja who held the throne in Amer. During his reign, Pṛthvīrāja along with other Rājputs, under the leadership of Rana Sanga of Mewar had unsuccessfully attempted to resist the first Mughal emperor Babur in 1527. Pṛthvīrāja died shortly after enduring for only a further six months. He left behind eighteen sons and three daughters by his nine queens. His eldest son Puranmal, born from his Queen Tanwar, upon his death succeeded him and ruled between 1527 to 1534. In contrast to his father, Puranmal opted to align with the Mughals, indeed, he died while aiding the Mughal emperor Humayun in his efforts to recapture the stronghold of Bayana, in the Battle of Mandrail. Since, his young son Sujamal, the natural heir was considered ineligible as he was an adolescent at the time, Puranmal's younger step-brother Bhimsingh instead ruled from 1534 to 1537. After this period Bhimsingh was succeeded by his eldest son Ratansingh from 1537 to 1548. However, Ratansingh was ruthlessly murdered by his step-brother Askaran, who proclaimed himself king. In response, the court of Amer united to overthrow him and subsequently in June 1548 Bhārmal, the fourth son of Pṛthvīrāja became the monarch of Amer.²⁶ Upon Bhārmal's ascension to the throne of Amer, the Mughals led by Humayun had not firmly established themselves within India, encountering strong resistance from other rulers such as Bahadur Shah of Gujarat and Sher Shah Suri who became key adversaries. During this precarious situation, Bhārmal would form a decisive alliance with the Mughals which would prove to be crucial to his survival later. Thus, the Kachvāhās became the first significant Rājput allies of the Mughals. Although, it is worth recalling that prior to Bhārmal it was actually Puranmal who was the first to develop a rapport with the Mughal clan, and therefore Bhārmal's policy of befriending the Mughals was a continuation and progression of an earlier diplomatic position adopted towards the Mughals. During Bhārmal's reign, a critical episode occurred in 1556, when he came to the

²² Jadunath Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, (Delhi, 1984), p.20

²³ The name of the place 'Amer' is the modern equivalent of 'Amber'.

²⁴ Hortsman Monika, *Jaipur 1778 The Making of a King*, (Germany, 2013), p.20

²⁵ Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.31

²⁶ Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.30-34

aid of Majnun Khan Qaqshal, a Mughal commandant, who was in a dangerous predicament caused by Haji Khan, a former servant of Sher Shah. Bhārmal organized safe passage for the Mughal commander to reach Akbar's court at Delhi. Once he reached Akbar safely, Majnun Khan described to Akbar the loyalty and bravery of Bhārmal. Akbar being impressed, subsequently invited Bhārmal to the court of Delhi and rewarded him. Some six years later this act would prove to be vital for the survival of Bhārmal as the presiding Kachvāhā ruler.²⁷

As mentioned earlier Suja, the son of the former Kachvāhā ruler Puranmal was denied the throne because he was considered too young, however as he grew older he sought the help of Mirza Muhammad Sharfuddin Hussain, Akbar's governor of Mewat to retrieve the throne of Amer. Consequently, Bhārmal was forced to abandon Amer as Mirza Muhammad Sharfuddin Hussain laid siege to Amer with a large army. To pacify Mirza Sharfuddin, Bhārmal handed over his own son and nephews to act as a goodwill gesture until he was able to offer a suitable tribute.²⁸ However, Mirza Sharafuddin was dissatisfied with Bhārmal's offer and prepared to invade Amer once again with a greater force. In these dire circumstances Bhārmal met Chaghtai Khan, a court member of Akbar's administration, who pleaded on his behalf to Akbar. Considering the earlier favorable rapport between Bhārmal and Akbar, Akbar offered aid to Bhārmal and summoned him to his court, subsequently they met in 1562. During this meeting, the alliance between the Kachvāhās and Mughals was formalized. In honor of this relationship Bhārmal offered his eldest daughter Hira Kunwari in marriage to Akbar. Akbar also commanded Mirza Sharafuddin to surrender Bhārmal's son and nephews to Akbar for safe return.²⁹ As a result of this union, Bhārmal's family became engaged in Akbar's direct service, Bhārmal's son and grandson, Mānsingh and Bhagavāndāsa were enrolled in the army of Akbar, and so began a long and fruitful alliance for both parties with Mānsingh becoming one of Akbar's chief partners leading to the rapid expansion of the Mughal empire.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava pioneers in Vṛndāvana

During this period of political transformation, two former ministers of the Bengal Sultanate who had since become captivated by the missionary activities of Caitanya, arrived in Vṛndāvana. There they became the recognized leaders of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, pioneering the efforts of the community. The Husain Shahi dynasty held its reign over Bengal for approximately half a century, beginning with the demise of Abyssinian rule in Bengal, which then witnessed its last 'wazir' or prime minister Syed Husain Sharif Makki (more commonly known as Husain Shah) rise

²⁷ Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.34-35

²⁸ Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.35

²⁹ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.17

to the throne to become Sultan of Bengal in 1494. Although Husain Shah strove to extradite the remnants of the ousted Abyssinian regime and acquired a reputation as an aggressive ruler,³⁰ nevertheless he recognized the need to govern diplomatically to prolong his reign and build his new regime. To this end he surrounded himself with an expert council who would support his objectives through intelligent strategic advice and thus occupied significant posts within his administration. It is intriguing to consider that these two figures that held key positions within the regime of king Husain Shah were originally members of the *brahmin* community. Consequently, these brothers were allegedly ostracized from the *brahmin* community due to their intimate affiliation with the Muslim regime. The brothers were highly educated and wielded consummate expertise in statecraft, therefore they were charged with respectable and highly responsible posts within the Sultan's regime, those being the prime minister and chief secretary. Within Husain Shah's regime, they were known as Sarkar Malik³¹ and Dabir Khas³² reflective of their posts of honor.³³ The title Dabir was reserved for the Personal or Chief Secretary of the Sultan himself. The Dabir operated within the department of correspondence under the Sultan which was called 'Diwan-i-Insha', often supported by a team of subordinate Dabirs. It was an integral role within the central secretariat and could only be held by a particularly trusted and skilled statesman, being privy to the confidential deliberations of the king. The role of Dabir involved state correspondence, diplomacy and entailed regular communication with governors, tributaries and foreign dignitaries.³⁴ The title Sarkar Malik seems to indicate an occupation comparable to the role of the prime minister. Both these roles were critical components within the administrative machinery core of the Sultanate. It is also described that their younger brother, Anupama, was the superintendent of the state's mint facility.³⁵ It can be inferred that these brothers were an irreplaceable resource for the Sultan. Indeed, on the cusp of Sanātana's explosive departure from the administration, Sultan Husain Shah expresses his dependence on Sanātana for the functioning of his government and arrests him out of fear of him leaving, having already witnessed Rūpa resign from his position. In this

³⁰ Ali Muhammad Mohar, *History of the Muslims of Bengal*, (Riyadh, 1985) p.183 and p.191

³¹ (CC 2.1.174) p.346

³² (CC 2.1.165) p.346

³³ Dr OBL Kapoor states Dabir Khasa is derived from the Persian word Dabir-i-khasa which means private secretary. 'Malik' is derived from Arabic 'Malik' which means king, Sakara is derived from Arabic 'Sagira' which means sub or under that is next to the king.

[Dr O.B.L. Kapoor, *The Gosvamis of Vrndavana*, (New Delhi, 1995), p.37]

³⁴ Taraphadāra Mamatājura Rahamāna, *Husain Shahi Bengal*, (Dacca, 1965), p.100

³⁵ Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *Hindu-Muslim relations in Bengal*, (Delhi, 1985), p.34

episode described in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, an important biography on Caitanya, Husain Shah conveys the intimate relationship they shared, by claiming they were indeed like brothers.³⁶ Nevertheless, both Rūpa and Sanātana in due course would free themselves from their responsibilities within the Sultan’s regime. Upon leaving their roles in the Bengal Sultanate administration they would meet with Caitanya and become inspired and enamored by his activities. After receiving instructions from Caitanya, they would eventually arrive and settle in Vṛndāvana, pioneering the community’s efforts there.

In Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava history these two brothers are glorified in biographies such as *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*³⁷ as having laid the literary foundations of the tradition following the departure of Caitanya, and expounding for the benefit of all future generations of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas the principle tenets and teachings of Caitanya. It is also them who are credited primarily for the establishment of pilgrimage sites in Vṛndāvana. Given their acclaimed contributions to the missionary activities of Caitanya, it would appear uncharacteristic of them to have been so intimately connected with the political regime in Bengal at the time. In fact, their early history attests to their very traditional *brahminical* upbringing, and their political domicile within the Sultan’s administration does pose a conundrum. According to accounts, they were descendants of a lineage of great *brahmin* kings of Karnataka.³⁸ However due to a

³⁶ (CC 2.19.20-24) p.612-613

³⁷ Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, the author of the *Caitanya caritāmṛta*, and the Gosvāmīs such as Rūpa and Sanātana were close associates in Vṛndāvana, this may have influenced his portrayal of them in his work. Indeed, he is credited with equating the theology proposed by the Gosvāmīs with the direct instructions of Caitanya. Therefore, according to the Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja the Gosvāmīs had been empowered by Caitanya to provide a theological basis and justification for the practice adopted by his followers. [Stewart, Tony K. *Final word: the Caitanya caritāmṛta and the grammar of religious tradition*, (New York, 2010) p. 199] In contrast, in other well-known biographies such as the *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, Rūpa and Sanātana are seldomly mentioned.

³⁸ In the conclusion of Jīva Gosvāmī’s *Laghu-Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* he states the following in respect to the ancestral lineage of his uncle Sanātana Gosvāmī. Sanātana Gosvāmī had given his *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* commentary to Jīva Gosvāmī who edited as the *Laghu-Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī*. In the description, he claims that Sanātana and Rūpa were descendants of a respected family of brahmins who were part of the royalty of Karnataka. Their earliest ancestor was known as Sarvājñā, a brahmin descending from the the Bharadvāja gotra or lineage. He was the most respectable brahmin of Karnataka. He became the king of the region in the 14th century. He was extremely learned and often labelled ‘Jagad-guru’ or world-teacher. His son was Aniruddha, and also ruled as king. Aniruddha had two sons, Rupeśvara and Harihara. Rupeśvara was expert in all scriptural learning. His brother Harihara excelled in the scriptures

family dispute several generations prior, the kingdom was usurped from their forefathers, leading to their great grandfather's relocation to Bengal. Their father, Kumaradeva, would eventually move to East Bengal, where he would father three sons, later to be known as Sanātana, Rūpa and Anupama.³⁹ Anupama would father a son who would later join the ranks of his uncles known as Jīva Gosvāmī to assist in enunciating the theological doctrines of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism after the departure of Caitanya. In their youth, the three brothers received a good education, and consequently the fame of their erudition and scholarship appears to have attracted the attention of the Sultan Husain Shah, who was keen to populate his ministerial posts with well qualified and trustworthy subjects. Although, it was not unheard of for respectable Hindu citizens to take up employment under the Sultan,⁴⁰ nevertheless later traditional accounts seem to suggest that they were forced into employment out of fear of retribution if they were to refuse.⁴¹ Following this arrangement and their subsequent

concerning royal politics. Upon his death, although Aniruddha had divided his realm, Rupeśvara was forced to leave his ancestral home, Karnataka for Paurastya with his wife. There, he became the friend of the king, Raja Sri Shekhareśvar. Rupeśvara's son was Padmanabha, who was a great pandit in the Vedic scriptures. Padmanabha settled at Navahatta, (Naihatti) on the banks of the Ganges in Bengal. He had eighteen daughters and five sons. All his sons were expert in the scriptures. The names of his sons were Purushottama, Jagannatha, Narayana, Murari, and Mukunda. His youngest son, Mukunda, moved to Fateyabada near Jessore in Bakla Chandradwip Paragana. Sri Mukundadeva's son was Sri Kumaradeva. He had many children of which included Rūpa, Sanātana and Anupama, father of Jīva.

[Neal Delmonico, *Sacred Rapture: A study of the religious aesthetic of Rupa Gosvamin*, (Chicago, 1990) p.276-279]

³⁹ Delmonico, *Sacred Rapture*, p.278

⁴⁰ Hence, it could also be presumed that after having moved there, the family sought employment with the regime.

⁴¹ According to Bhakti Ratnakara 1.580-83 which is a text by Narahari Cakravati in the 18th century it is described they took up these roles out of fear of Husain Shah. (Delmonico, *Sacred Rapture*, p. 282).

Dr OBL Kapoor shares more details to this version of events, a mason had been executed on account of an offense, leaving his work on a particular tower half-finished. The king, noticing the incomplete mason-work, requested one of his accompanying soldiers to go to Moragram. However, the king's attention was unexpectedly diverted before he could instruct his soldier to fully enable him to secure suitable masons in Moragram to complete the work on the tower. The soldier, being fearful of disobeying the order of the king, departed for Moragram, bereft of any directions. Despondent, the soldier chanced upon Sanātana, who enquired as to the reasons for the soldier's moroseness. On hearing of the soldier's unusual dilemma, Sanātana could

employment within the court of Husain Shah, the brothers relocated nearer the capital in Rāmakeli, setting the scene for their eventual meeting with Caitanya. Regardless of the exact circumstances surrounding their employment, Sanātana and Rūpa, along with their younger brother Anupama, accepted prominent ministerial posts within Husain Shah's government, and were rewarded handsomely for their service to the king.

Considering the direction eventually taken by the brothers and the upheaval their eventual actions caused in the court of the king, it is worthwhile examining their behaviors and practices during their employment, prior to their dramatic departures. While some attest to their excommunication from the *brahmin* community, evidence suggests that they maintained a respectable *brahminical* lifestyle in their residence in Rāmakeli. For instance, it is known that scholars and *brahmins* would visit the brothers regularly, and indeed many migrated from their distant homelands to reside nearby to Sanātana and Rūpa.⁴² Furthermore, it appears that while at Rāmakeli they pursued further education in the devotional arts and scriptures under Vidyāvācaspati, the brother of the famous *Advaitin* scholar convert of Caitanya known as Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya.⁴³ Indeed, their loyalties to the *bhakti* traditions were often praised, and it is said that they cultivated strong devotional practices in the worship of Kṛṣṇa from childhood and maintained such practices even while at Rāmakeli. It also appears that the brothers used the wealth they obtained from their service to the king to sustain local *brahmins*.⁴⁴ Other strong evidence of their affiliation to the *bhakti* cult includes the

understand the intentions of the king, and advised the soldier to return to the king with masons to complete the unfinished tower. When the king saw that the soldier had returned with masons despite not being specifically instructed to do so, he was astounded and asked the soldier to explain what had happened. The soldier related his encounter with Sanātana, and the king, who was already acquainted with the fame of the brothers, sent a request for the brothers to work under his administration. The brothers were afraid that a rejection might invite a vicious retaliation, and therefore agreed unwillingly to accept the offer. According to this account, the king heard about the illustrious reputation of the brothers and openly insisted on their attendance at his court, threatening to kill several innocent members of the community should they refuse. These accounts suggest that the brothers only accepted their posts out of fear. (Kapoor, *The Gosvamis of Vrndavana*, p.36-37)

⁴² Taraphadāra, *Husain Shahi Bengal*, p.335

Delmonico, *Sacred Rapture*, p.282 (Bhakti ratnakara 1.592-94)

⁴³ Kapoor, *The Gosvamis of Vrndavana*, p.35

⁴⁴ Sarkar, *Hindu-Muslim relations in Bengal*, p.42

Hamsaduṭṭa,⁴⁵ a poem by Rūpa which explores and extolls the unique spirit of the land of Vṛndāvana, the home of Kṛṣṇa. It is interesting to note here that in spite of their dedication to the Vaiṣṇava cult and the *brahmin* community, the brothers remained securely within the employment of the Muslim regime and honored the protocols appropriate to their posts. Therefore, considering their vast and extensive experience with political power coupled with their illustrious devotion and scholarship, they were natural candidates to initiate the development of Vṛndāvana for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community, which was located in proximity to the apex of Mughal power.

Akbar's Reign (1556-1605)

Akbar's alliance with the Kachvāhās

Of all the Mughal emperors, the most successful is often acclaimed to have been Akbar, who ruled from 1556 to 1605. During his reign, the Mughal empire expanded and became the most powerful political force in the Indian subcontinent. Several strategies proved to be crucial to this new-found success, which included the establishment of robust alliances with Rājput kings. However, it has been suggested that this specific strategy was instigated earlier by his father, Humayun. According to the *Zakhirat-ul-Khawanin*, which was written by Shaikh Fakhruddin Bhakkari during the mid-seventeenth century, Humayun was probed for the reasons for which the Mughals had encountered failure in expanding their territory in India. In response, Humayun described the absence of a vibrant positive alliance with the Rājputs as one of the key impediments. He further describes that in comparison, the Rājputs and Afghans who had thwarted the Mughal efforts, sustained a strong pact with each other. Therefore, he stressed that if the Mughals were to progress and expand their sovereignty in North India, an alliance with the Rājputs was deemed crucial.⁴⁶ Consequently, Akbar took this observation from his father to heart and ventured away from protocols established in their earlier dealings with the Hindu polities. Instead Akbar enticed them to become enthusiastic participants of the regime, defending and expanding the empire and subsequently becoming co-benefactors from its successes. Subsequently, they were given comparable rights and responsibilities as the Muslim nobles and became an integral part of the Mughal machinery. Of all the Rājputs, the Kachvāhā dynasty especially fared well, with the likes of Mānsingh elevated to principal positions within

⁴⁵ Rūpa's Hamsadutta 141, refers to Sanātana as Sarkar which is suggestive that this was written during the time of their occupations for the Sultan and before they met Caitanya (Reference provided by Dr Rembert Lutjeharms).

⁴⁶ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.18

the Mughal regime.⁴⁷

Although initiated earlier, the alliance with the Mughals moves significantly beyond superficial relations with the appointment of Kachvāhā ruler Rāja Bhārmal of Amer, who submits to the sovereign ruler Akbar. Following this submission an alliance was formed and in return the Kachvāhā kings were permitted to continue to rule their ancestral lands. However, in exchange, they were also expected to provide soldiers when required, and were to pay regular tribute, acknowledging the overarching sovereignty of the Mughal empire. To seal this alliance with Akbar, Rāja Bhārmal also arranged for his daughter to be married to Akbar. Marriage was one of numerous ways that this pact was made official. Marriage was often used as a currency of politics, safeguarding alliances, whether between Rājputs or in this case between the Mughals and the Kachvāhās. Indeed, the giving of Hindu princesses in marriage to Muslim rulers had been done long before the union of Akbar and Bhārmal's daughter. Ensuring allegiances with other political entities was crucial for expansion. It was no doubt felt that a personal bond was the highest assurance of political fidelity. In such politically orientated marriages the bride was generally thought to be lost to her father's family, in this case however, it has been claimed that Akbar's marriage led to a unification of families, which fostered a level of respect that enabled Bhārmal's family to hold their heads high in pride in the court of Akbar. Although, the Rājput princesses that entered the Mughal family embraced a Mughal lifestyle including the adoption of Islam, nevertheless, there was a heightened level of respect, which led to an unprecedented level of trust and collaboration, particularly in light of the fact that the new generation of Mughal princes retained an amalgamation of Rājput and Mughal genetic traits.⁴⁸ This strategically unifying marriage, led to the birth of the future emperor, Salim or as known by his imperial title, Jahangir. On this occasion, Akbar rejoiced, particularly considering that formerly some of his offspring had perished. Thus, Salim's birth filled him with a profound sense of gratitude. Consequently, the introduction of Salim brought Bhārmal's family even closer to Akbar.⁴⁹

As testament to this robust alliance, the Kachvāhās were entrusted to protect and enhance the Mughal empire in vital parts of their domain, their contribution to the Mughal cause was significant and considerable. For instance, in 1572, in Akbar's absence on the eve of a possible offensive in Agra from Ibrahmi Hussain Mirza, Rāja Bhārmal was assigned to protect Agra, along with Abdulah Sultanpuri. This assignment symptomized the mounting trust that the

⁴⁷ Asher and Talbot. *India Before Europe*, p.125-126

⁴⁸ Jadunath Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.37-38

⁴⁹ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.22

Mughal ruler held for the Kachvāhā clan. However, as the rising Mughal kingdom grew in power and scope, it also encountered resistance from some of the region's native Rājput rulers such as Rana Udai Singh and his son Pratap Singh of Mewar who were alarmed by the Mughal incursions into their territories. The Kachvāhā rulers seemed to regard Mughal presence as an opportunity whereas others perhaps perceived their presence as a challenge to their respective sovereignties. After 1563, Mewar remained the only large independent Rājput state, Akbar regarded this a major lingering impediment to ruling and unifying his empire. On behalf of Akbar, the Kachvāhā kings had petitioned Pratap Singh of Mewar, the son of Udai Singh to submit to the emperor. Mānsingh had visited Mewar and was later followed by his father Bhagavan Dāsa. Even Rāja Todar Mal another of Akbar's key courtiers had attempted to enroll Pratap Singh into the service of the Mughal empire. However, Pratap Singh's continual pledges to submit to Akbar were discovered to be a farce. Thus, in 1576 Akbar assigned Mānsingh to lead an army to Mewar to force Pratap Singh to submit to the empire. Thus, a historic battle ensued in 1576 which successfully led to the downfall of Pratap Singh.⁵⁰ Mānsingh was commended for his efforts, in subduing the independent Rājput prince, Pratap Singh, fulfilling the aspirations of the Mughal master Akbar to extend the reach of his empire.

During Akbar's rule, the Kachvāhās were also considered the primary protectors and wardens of the north-western frontier.⁵¹ In this regard, the year 1581 was a difficult and challenging time during Akbar's reign. Not only was a plot being hatched to overthrow him, furthermore, his officers in Bengal and Bihar had revolted against him. His brother Mirza Muhammad Hakim, the ruler of Kabul, was also plotting to usurp his position as the Mughal sovereign. In response to these challenges, Aziz Koka was sent to the east, with Todar Mal to assist him. Akbar himself marched to Lahore, forcing Mirza Muhammad Hakim backwards, who had had till then been valiantly resisted by Saeed Khan and Bhagavandāsa. Akbar now decided to personally travel to Kabul and delegated Mānsingh to lead an army. From Abul Fazl's account Mānsingh was escorted by a large Rājput force which included Rai Rai Singh, Rai Durga, Askaran, and so on. After a fruitful campaign against Mizra Hakim, led effectively by the Rājputs, Akbar returned Kabul to Mirza Hakim however now firmly within the jurisdiction of Akbar's governance. He rewarded the faithful Kachvāhās by appointing Bhagavāndāsa governor of Lahore jointly with Saeed Khan and appointed Mānsingh chief of the Indus region. And later with Saeed Khan's transfer to Delhi, Bhagavāndāsa remained the sole governor of Lahore.⁵²

⁵⁰ Jadunath Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.46-50

⁵¹ Jadunath Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.63

⁵² Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.29

Close ties between the Kachvāhās and Akbar were also demonstrated in the battle of Samel where both Bhagavāndāsa and Mānsingh exhibited great courage. The brother of Bhagavāndāsa, Bhupat, was killed in the battle. To help alleviate the family's sorrow, Akbar against convention granted permission to his wife, the daughter of Rāja Bhārmal to go to Amer for mourning. Eventually, in revenge Akbar himself murdered Shah Madad, the foster brother of Muhammad Hussain Mirza who had been responsible for the death of Bhupat.⁵³

The Kachvāhās were constant allies of Akbar during his reign. They protected the north-western frontier so well that for the next four years Akbar was relieved of concern for that region of his empire and left free to subdue Bihar, Bengal, Gujarat and the Deccan. Furthermore, when additional threats were presented before the Mughals, the Kachvāhās were at hand to protect the Mughal empire. Bhagavāndāsa assisted in the conquest of Kashmir. Mānsingh led campaigns against the Yusufzai clans of Afghan with Todar Mal and played a principal role in fulfilling the ambitions of the regime in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Deccan.⁵⁴ Appropriate to their efforts, Bhārmal's son Bhagavāndāsa and grandson Mānsingh were rewarded influential positions in the Mughal courts. Thus, the families grew ever closer, and Mānsingh became one of Akbar's closest companions, even though far younger than him. The development of the numerical *mansabdari* ranking system illustrates the fortunes of the Kachvāhā clan during the reign of Akbar. The *mansabdari* system was a key component of the administrative system introduced by Akbar. The Persian term '*mansab*' denotes rank determining the positions and salaries of a governmental official. The *mansabdars* formed the ruling officers in the Mughal empire. The ruling class were given a specific numeric rank, those who held a rank above 1000 would be considered an *amir*(noble).⁵⁵ Amongst the Rājputs, the Kachvāhās had the highest ranks. Akbar's intimate relationship with the family, coupled with the remarkable achievements of Mānsingh across the empire reflected the unprecedented rankings attained. Indeed, by the end of Akbar's reign in 1605, Mānsingh had attained an extraordinary ranking of 7000.⁵⁶ Mānsingh was a brilliant general and administrator, his innate ability and royal allegiance allowed him to advance to an exceptional rank, consequently he was awarded the highest *mansab* possible for a court member other than a Mughal Prince.⁵⁷ Akbar and Mānsingh maintained an intimate relationship, so much so that Mānsingh was designated his

⁵³ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.24

⁵⁴ Jadunath Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.75

⁵⁵ Athar Ali M, *The Mughal nobility under Aurangzeb*, (Delhi, 2001), p.7

⁵⁶ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.32

⁵⁷ Catherine B. Asher, "Kacchavaha Pride and Prestige: The Temple Patronage of Rāja Māna Simha", in Margaret H. Case Ed., *Govindadeva: a dialogue in stone*, (New Delhi, 1996), p.215

son, *farzand*, even though Mānsingh was only 8 years younger than him.⁵⁸ Akbar also conferred upon Mānsingh the highest title possible by declaring him *Mirza Rājah*. The word *Mirza* is an abbreviation for the Persian epithet *amir-zadah*, meaning ‘born of a king’, thus Akbar openly declared to the world that Mānsingh was no less than his very own offspring, a Mughal prince of royal status, even though a Rājput by birth.⁵⁹

Of the Rājputs, it wasn’t only the Kachvāhās that formed intimate relations with Akbar. Other Rājputs were also highly valued and became significant members of the Mughal administration, such as Rai Sal Darbari of Shekhawati, Todar Mal, Rai Patr Dāsa and so on. During Akbar’s rule, the Rājputs were entrusted not only within their ancestral lands but also employed by Akbar outside Rājasthan, and thus they became intimate and trusted aides of the Mughal emperor.⁶⁰ They took significant positions in the empire, governing in places far and wide such as Kashmir, Bihar, Bengal, Rājasthan, Gujarata and Orissa. During his reign Akbar’s Rājput policy had fully matured, and the coalition with the Rājputs had become stable and pervaded his entire empire. Amongst the Rājputs, the Kachvāhās held the highest positions in the imperial administrative system. Their relations with the Mughals evolved and blossomed transcending political ties to becoming intimate comrades in the Mughal empire.

Akbar and Kachvāhā patronage of Vṛndāvana

As relations between the Akbar and Kachvāhās flourished, so too did patronage of the temples that were of Kachvāhā interest. The first substantial developments in Vṛndāvana for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect occur in the early stages of the Mughal-Kachvāhā coalition. Political stability and political patronage remained crucial for the survival and growth of temples, and consequently due to the generosity of the Kachvāhās, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples and community in Vṛndāvana benefited tremendously.

Hindu piety illustrated by patronage remained a core feature of a Hindu king. This trait exhibited by the Kachvāhās who made substantial contributions to the development of Vṛndāvana generally. For instance, Bhārma’s predecessor, Ratan Singh (1537-48) had a ‘ten-pillared palace’ built in Mathurā at Viśrāma Ghāṭa. Bhagavāndāsa also erected a tower beside the Yamuna to commemorate his mother’s *satī*, and is also credited with the construction of

⁵⁸ R.Nath, “Śrī Govindadeva’s Itinerary from Vṛndāvana to Jayapura”, in Margaret H.Case Ed., *Govindadeva: a dialogue in stone*, (New Delhi, 1996), p.163

⁵⁹ Jadunath Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.86

⁶⁰ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.24

the temple of Harideva at Govardhana.⁶¹ However, of all the sects, the Kachvāhās were especially drawn to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples in Vṛndāvana, perceiving them as akin to symbols of Kachvāhā prestige. Consequently, key Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples such as the Govindadeva and the Madana-Mohana temple both received regular direct patronage from the clan.⁶² Indeed, from the very beginnings of the Kachvāhā dynasty, since the reign of Rāja Bhārmal in 1565, they had supported these Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples as evidenced by the imperial grants assigned to the Govindadeva and the Madana-Mohana temples. During his reign, Bhārmal recommended 200 *bighās* of land to be gifted to Gopal Dāsa who received this grant as the chief priest of the Govindadeva and Madana-Mohana temples. This generosity was testament to the early Kachvāhā dedication for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples.⁶³

The Kachvāhā dynasty were also responsible for one of the largest temples in all of India during the reign of Akbar, the temple was approximately eighty meters in length, taking almost fourteen years to construct. This temple became home to the Govindadeva deity. The celebrated Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava saint Rūpa Gosvāmī had constructed the first home for Govindadeva. Later, a second temple was built under the supervision of Mānsingh. Due to his prominent political position, Mānsingh drew on Mughal resources to construct the Govindadeva temple. The foundation of this new temple was red sandstone, quarried from Tantapura, which was also utilized for the imperial projects in Agra and Fatehpur Sikri.⁶⁴ Consequently, the Govindadeva temple resembled other Mughal constructions, principally the distinctive red sandstone feature of Mughal monuments. Other resemblances included domes enclosed with radiating petals, piercing angled vaults and an amalgamation of alternating pillars and arches. Considering the same foundations and the same constructional devices were used as those employed in the imperial projects, one presumes the same architects were also used. In other words, it is safe to assume that the same team of architects that were commissioned to create Mughal masonry at different sites in the empire were also deployed to develop the

⁶¹ Entwistle, *Braj Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage*, p.159-160

⁶² Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, p.151

⁶³ Tarapada Mukherjee and Irfan Habib, *Akbar and the Temples of Mathurā and Its Environs*, (Dabolim, 1987), p.236

⁶⁴ Nalini Thakur, "Building of Govindadeva", in Margaret H. Case Ed., *Govindadeva: a dialogue in stone*, (New Delhi, 1996), p.23

Govindadeva temple in Vṛndāvana.⁶⁵ This appears to be the case for the Govindadeva temple, hence the sanctuary inevitably resembled the majestic style of a grand Mughal monument.⁶⁶ The Govindadeva temple of Vṛndāvana built by Rāja Mānsingh portrayed a blend of Mughal and Hindu traits reflecting the alliance at an imperial level. Thus, this temple was seen as a collaboration of several entities, as described by Śrīvatsa Gosvāmī, who claims that the architectural design of Govindadeva temple can be seen as a politics of embrace, reflecting Hindu, Muslim and even Buddhist features, he comments, ‘When a Hindu temple, decorated with Buddhist features, dances in love with an Islamic Monument, Govindadeva was born’.⁶⁷ Śrīvatsa Gosvāmī also proposed that in the case of the creation of the Govindadeva temple, both Akbar and the Gosvāmīs made concessions. Akbar who didn’t believe in the worship of images provided land for the worship of Govindadeva and the Gosvāmīs neglected age-old traditions for constructing temples in this period. Although challenging and necessitating concessions from both parties, they both nevertheless profited from this union.⁶⁸ Therefore, despite the apparent compromises the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas had to concede, they greatly benefited from this political alliance, and as Tarapada Mukherjee notes, ‘Soon after the death of the six Gosvāmīs, the big temples of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect accumulated so much land and wealth that each of their custodians attained the status of a zamindar’.⁶⁹

Vṛndāvana underwent a radical transformation and although sparsely populated became inhabited with new constructions like the Govindadeva temple within the pastoral and agricultural setting. However, as highlighted by Monika Horstmann, ‘This imperial involvement was not without its motivations of course, and the construction of the Govindadeva temple was seen as a combined effort by the Mughal administration and the Kachvāhā clan to gain further control over Bengal by accommodating the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, which was popular in that region’.⁷⁰ In other words, it could also be argued that the construction of temples

⁶⁵ There is also a reference in an inscription by Jīva Gosvāmī that architects from Delhi had been employed for the construction of the Govindadeva temple. The inscription will be shared later in this chapter.

⁶⁶ George Michell, “Missing Sanctuary”, in Margaret H. Case Ed., *Govindadeva: a dialogue in stone*, (New Delhi, 1996), p.119

⁶⁷ Shrivatsa Gosvāmī, “Govinda darśana: Lotus in Stone”, in Margaret H. Case Ed., *Govindadeva: a dialogue in stone*, (New Delhi, 1996), p.269-277

⁶⁸ Gosvāmī, “Govinda darśana”, p.275

⁶⁹ Tarpada Mukherjee, *Manuscripts and Documents in Gauḍīya Temples of Vrindavan and Rājasthan*, (Vrindavan, 1980) p.16

⁷⁰ Kiyokazu Okita, *Hindu theology in early modern South Asia*, (Oxford, 2014), p.28

principally served the sovereignty of the sponsor, indeed, as the building blocks were being provided by Akbar's court, the monument resembled Mughal architecture, thus it certainly promoted Akbar's authority in his empire. Furthermore, Mānsingh appears to have considered patronage in Vṛndāvana as enhancing Kachvāhā prestige or to memorialize family members. Thus, temple inscriptions are found which describe his ancestry back to Pṛthvīrāja and it is well known that he built temples to commemorate his departed mother and son. In other words, temples were built for personal as well as political and religious reasons, hence motivations were blurred.⁷¹ Traditional accounts also describe that Mānsingh, prior to embarking on a critical battle on behalf of the emperor, visited Vṛndāvana and went before Govindadeva. There he declared 'I shall respectfully construct a dwelling place for king Govinda in Vṛndāvana, praised by the gods, by means of which, indeed, there should be a [revival in] connection with the festivals of the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa.'⁷² Immediately after this declaration, construction began. Along with the construction of the temple, the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana received complete immunity from all taxes. The temple took fourteen years to be constructed, beginning in 1576 and ending in 1590, with an extraordinary expenditure deployed in the process of construction. Consequently, whatever the motivations behind the temple, nevertheless it became one of the finest examples of architectural art in Northern India.

Despite Mānsingh's generous patronage and support of the Govindadeva temple, the nature of Mānsingh's allegiances to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect remain obscure. It has been suggested that it was due to the influence of Raghunātha Dāsa, a prominent Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teacher that the temple of Govindadeva at Vṛndāvana was constructed by Mānsingh,⁷³ however, it is also clear that although his commitment to Govindadeva is self-evident, there is no evidence to support that he underwent a formal induction in the Caitanya lineage. Therefore, others have claimed that the original motive to erect the Govindadeva temple was born from his father and Mānsingh's involvement was driven by the desire to fulfil his father's last wishes.⁷⁴ It is also well known that Mānsingh was a patron of other deities such as Devi, Śiva and other Vaiṣṇava temples. He was also responsible for the reconstruction and restoration of the Jaganātha temple in Puri.⁷⁵ He also built palaces and temples in his ancestral home Amer. His patronage exceeded just temples and palaces, he was also known for constructing mosques

⁷¹ Asher, "Kacchavaha Pride and Prestige", p.216

⁷² Gopal Narayan Bahura, "Śrī Govinda Gāthā Service rendered to Govinda", in Margaret H. Case Ed., *Govindadeva: a dialogue in stone*, (New Delhi, 1996), p.199

⁷³ Bahura, "Śrī Govinda Gāthā Service", p.199

⁷⁴ Asher, "Kacchavaha Pride and Prestige", p.216

⁷⁵ Asher, "Kacchavaha Pride and Prestige", p.220

in Lahore and Raj Mahal and maintained the shrine Māmū Bhānjā in Hājīpura.⁷⁶ Thus, the Govindadeva temple was just one of many structures across the empire during Akbar's reign instigated by Mānsingh, reflecting the special alliance between the Kachvāhās and the Mughals. The Kachvāhās such as Mānsingh retained a dual role, he was a leading Kachvāhā king amongst the Rājputs and also the viceroy to Akbar. This dual role is illustrated in engravings in the palace he built in Bihar as governor. In these engravings, there is one inscription in Persian which describes Mānsingh in respect to his position to Akbar, and another in Sanskrit where Akbar is omitted and instead Mānsingh is exclusively exalted.⁷⁷ Mānsingh's identity as an independent Hindu king didn't generally pose a threat to his role as a leading governor of Akbar, and the same applies for other Rājput rulers who were aligned with Akbar. Indeed, such dual roles were considered essential for the synergistic rule and expansion of the Mughal regime. Nevertheless, there were instances of tension, for example, in 1594 Mānsingh was designated to govern Bengal, during his assignment he built a city which was known initially as Rājanagar. However, Akbar preferred the city to be known as Akbarnagar for obvious reasons and under duress Mānsingh conceded.⁷⁸ This case of tension reflected the need to serve the Mughal empire, yet the individual promotion of the king.

There were also other Rājputs who contributed to the development of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community's status in Vṛndāvana. For instance, another important influential courtier was Todar Mal, a Khatrī Hindu from Avadh who occupied the post of finance minister within the Mughal administration. He was a keen supporter of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school and was alleged to have been initiated by Raghunātha Bhatta Gosvāmī.⁷⁹ It is claimed that upon the request of Jīva Gosvāmī he petitioned Akbar to supply official acknowledgement for the positions held by the custodians of the Govindadeva and Madana-Mohana temples. Subsequently they were both officially recognized by the state under the authority of Jīva Gosvāmī. Todar Mal also arranged land grants for these respective temples.⁸⁰ The two temples were considered partners, as they had been built by Jīva's uncles Rūpa and Sanātana, however, that appears to change once the new Govindadeva temple had been constructed by Mānsingh, becoming the far larger one of the two. In 1584 Todar Mal personally arranged a grant of 100 *bighās* of land to the temple of Madana-Mohana in Vṛndāvana. He made this grant in the name

⁷⁶ Asher, "Kacchavaha Pride and Prestige", p.215

⁷⁷ Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p.71

⁷⁸ Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p.72

⁷⁹ Entwistle, *Braj Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage*, p.160

⁸⁰ Mukherjee and Habib, *Akbar and the Temples of Mathurā*, p.236

of Akbar to Gopal Dāsa, who served Jīva Gosvāmī as a priest not only in the temple of Madana-Mohana, but also at the Govindadeva temple and was elsewhere referred to as his *vakīl* or legal representative.⁸¹ Todar Mal has also been credited with providing resources to facilitate Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa's aspirations to restore numerous sacred sites in Vṛndāvana that had been rediscovered. Another courtier, Raysal Darbari, an associate of Mānsingh and the chief of the Shekhawat branch of the Kachvāhās, is also described to have been instrumental for the care of the Gopīnātha temple in Vṛndāvana.⁸²

A significant measure of the influence exerted by the Kachvāhā rulers and other royal courtiers such as Todar Mal upon the Mughal administration pertaining to patronage of temples in Vṛndāvana is evident from a somewhat surprising event in 1598. Akbar requested his principle aide Abul Fazl, the author of the official history of Akbar's reign, the *Akbarnama*, to survey the Vṛndāvana area to determine what type of land endowments were the temples in Vṛndāvana, Mathurā and Nandagaon entitled to. After consulting various *brahmins* from Mathurā, a total of thirty-five grants were endowed for temples, resulting in not only the consolidation of earlier commitments but also additional state-issued grants. Land endowments that had already been provided to eight temples were extended and a further six-hundred acres of land were divided amongst the remaining twenty-seven temples.⁸³ Furthermore, in 1562, Akbar also lifted the tax that had been imposed on all Hindus who visited places of pilgrimage; and in 1564 he repealed the *jizya* tax, a poll tax that had been levied on non-Muslim subjects.⁸⁴ There also exists an imperial *farman* from 1581, issued upon the orders of the Queen Mother, Hamida Banu Begam, and another by 'Abd'r Rahim Khan-I Khanan in 1588, both permitting the free grazing of the cows and oxen of Vithalrai⁸⁵ of 'Govardhana.' In 1593 Akbar also issued a *farman* prohibiting the hunting and slaughtering of peacocks in the *paraganas* of Mathurā, Sahar, Mangotta and Ao.⁸⁶ In this way, the political alliance between the Mughal ruler and the Kachvāhā kings and other courtiers such as Todar Mal, had a direct impact on the fortunes of pilgrimage places in Vṛndāvana and Mathurā. These examples illustrate the significance of political support in determining the prosperity of a sect. The success of the Mughal-Kachvāhā-Gauḍīya alliance was especially highlighted in the construction of one of the most magnificent temples of the era, the Govindadeva temple, considered the jewel in the crown of Gauḍīya

⁸¹ Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, p.157

⁸² Entwistle, *Braj Centre of Kṛṣṇa Pilgrimage*, p.160

⁸³ Mukherjee and Habib, *Akbar and the Temples of Mathurā*, p.239

⁸⁴ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.20

⁸⁵ Likely to be a reference to Vallabha's son, Vitthalnath.

⁸⁶ Mukherjee and Habib, *Akbar and the Temples of Mathurā*, p.238

Vaiṣṇava temples, instigated by one of Akbar's closest compatriots, Kachvāhā king Mānsingh.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Appreciation of Patronage

As discussed, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect in Vṛndāvana received generous patronage from the political regime, their appreciation and gratitude for the support was visible through the actions and words of Jīva Gosvāmī, who was considered to be a leader of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect in Vṛndāvana during Akbar's reign. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition was initiated in the early sixteenth century by its founder Caitanya. Although, he left little by the way of written work, he inspired a proliferation of literature by his followers which expanded on his teachings and drew its authority from canonical works connected to the tradition such as the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Jīva was a key contributor to this explosion of writings. Indeed, Jīva was considered one of the greatest Sanskrit scholars of his era.⁸⁷ In his compositions he refers to the teachings of his uncles Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī who were the leading composers of works that became central to the tradition post-Caitanya. Once Rūpa and Sanātana passed from this world, their nephew Jīva became the natural successor of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect in Vṛndāvana. Jīva's uncles Rūpa and Sanātana were direct students of Caitanya and Jīva's father Vallabha was the youngest of the three brothers. As a young child inspired by his uncles, Jīva embarked on a life of ascetism in Vṛndāvana. He also travelled to Navadvīpa where he met Nityānanda⁸⁸ who instructed him and led him on a pilgrimage tour of sites connected to Caitanya's early activities. Later he studied under Madhūsudana Vācaspati, Sanskrit grammar and philosophy. Jīva eventually returned to Vṛndāvana by 1541 and assisted his uncles in editing books such as Rūpa's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. Jīva also compiled numerous theological works himself that systemized Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology such as the *Sandarbhās*. He also imparted guidance and systematic training to another generation of influential Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas such as Śrīnivāsa, Narottama and Śyāmānanda. By their efforts the literatures that had emerged in Vṛndāvana, were distributed to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava strong holds in Bengal and Orissa, becoming foundational works for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect for generations to come.⁸⁹ Jīva was also left assets by his uncles and other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava figures in Vṛndāvana such as Raghunātha dāsa. Jīva Gosvāmī's contributions were multiple, he produced numerous theological texts and influenced later generations of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava leaders and subsequently the positions of other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava strongholds. However, a contribution that is seldom discussed is the responsibility he

⁸⁷ For more on the achievements of Jīva Gosvāmī consult: Ravi M.Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta of Jīva Gosvāmī*, (London, 2007) p.7

⁸⁸ Nityānanda, is considered an intimate associate of Caitanya and an avatar of Balarāma.

⁸⁹ For more on this topic consult: Stewart, *Final word*, p.3-6

undertook in the development of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temple estates in Vṛndāvana during the Mughal-Kachvāhā political regime. Jīva Gosvāmī's involvement in temple administration was extensive, he was instrumental in procuring land, nominating custodians for temples and petitioned ministers for imperial support. Jīva Gosvāmī also purchased land in Ariṭha known later as Rādhā-kuṇḍa from early as 1546. He also acquired land near the residence of Rūpa Gosvāmī. In 1568, he also petitioned Todar Mal to appeal to Akbar for the Madana-Mohana and Govindadeva temples to be officially entrusted to him as they had been gifted to him by his uncles. Indeed, earlier Jīva Gosvāmī had also received the inheritance of all the properties connected to his uncles, Rūpa and Sanātana. In 1588, he also received six plots of land in Ariṭha from Raghunātha Dāsa.⁹⁰ In 1601, he also further purchased land in Vṛndāvana, possessing twelve retreats or *kunjas* in Vṛndāvana. As he retired in 1606 he allocated custodianship of temples and effects to Vilāsadāsa and subsequently to Kṛṣṇa Dāsa.⁹¹ All these developments can be traced to official Mughal documentation. Therefore, as well as shaping the foundational corpus of works for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect and operating as the sect leader, we must also recognize that Jīva was engrossed in guarding Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava assets in Vṛndāvana, relying substantially on the presiding political forces in his personal endeavors to direct custodianship and implement administrative protocols concerning key Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples, lands and sites. Consequently, Jīva Gosvāmī acknowledged the support that the political regime provided and expressed his gratitude explicitly. For instance, a Sanskrit inscription known as the *Govinda-mandirāstakam* was compiled by him after completion of the new temple for Govindadeva by Mānsingh. This inscription consists of eight verses which includes praise directed to not only Kachvāhā king Mānsingh but also to Mughal ruler Akbar for his role in the construction of the majestic Govindadeva temple:

Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifesting a thirst to protect his own devotees, always appears situated on the yogapīṭha [seat of Yogamāyā] here in Vṛndā [Devī]'s forest [i.e. Vṛndāvana, which is] praised by the group of gods beginning with Śiva; [Vṛndāvana is thus] the major cause of frustration even in Vaikuṅṭha's [Viṣṇu's own realm's] heart; [in such a Vṛndāvana] manifests what is to be known by means of the group of hundreds of scriptures śruti-smṛti though

⁹⁰ Mukherjee and Habib, *Land Rights in the reign of Akbar*, p. 236-248

⁹¹ Irfan Habib, *From Arith to Radhakund*, (New Delhi, 2011), p.215-216

the principle of Śrī Govinda [i.e., Govinda manifests the truth of all scriptures there].

When Śrīman Akbar [sanskritized to Arkavara, "the best sun"] naturally ruled all the world, the group of good people engaged in [performing] their own dharma [proper actions] obtained happiness in the highest degree. The virtuous Vaiṣṇavas always gave him blessings joyfully because they considered that very place [Vṛndāvana to be] the place of Śrī Govinda [and therefore] worth residing in [and under Akbar such residence was possible].

In this place [Vṛndāvana] his [Akbar's] constant companion, the king named Śrī Māna Simha, having men [i.e., a leader of troops], a moon [that causes swelling] of the milk ocean [that is] the glory of Pṛthvīrājas shining lineage, the son of Bhagavanadāsa, born of the king Bhārahamalla (=Bhāramala), making the temple from his power [i.e., by his own strength], must ever partake of joy with stable Lakṣmi [prosperity; the proverbially fickle goddess of fortune].

Then Śrīman Arkavara, that piercing king of kings, marched to the enemy countries; the conqueror busies himself roving about and [making] ruin. Who on this earth does not know of that very lion among men [Śrī Mānavasimha, i.e. Mana Simha]? Kings going to battle with him, falling down [defeated, go] to heaven marked with signs of glory [or, they become the signs of his glory in heaven].

The victorious king, Śrī Māna Simha, is one [born in] the royal Kaccha[vāha] lineage. His best man, the intelligent Śrī Kalyāṇadāsa, who takes shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Govinda, must always be victorious. Joyfully creating that [or his, Govinda's] temple speedily, he zealously brought the work to completion.

Śrī Haridāsa, the foremost leader of those serving the lotus feet of Śrī Govinda, granting love to them [those serving Govinda], by means of whom, from the beginning, this temple, [is] increasing in the joy [rāsa, sweetness] of service, by whom the king, Śrī Māna Simha, duly obtained incredible bliss, must always rejoice.

Among the architects resident at Dillī [Indraprastha] is the venerable [one] named Govindadāsa, sheltered by Śrī Māna Simha; he built this beautiful temple here. The cause of happiness and prosperity to the respectable Vaiṣṇavas now and in the future, he must ever be made a receptacle of Hari's own compassion.

In the work here, who [is] the eminent Bhagavān and who is the expert Ugrasena? The two of them, dispatched by the king Śrī Māna Simha, must rejoice. Which other one is to be singled out? Or who is better [and who] is less? He [i.e. each] gave help to the other step by step; both must gain the highest joy.

The temple's creations [was] in the [samvat] year called Muni(7), Veda(4), Rtu(6), Candra(1), [i.e. V.S. 1647/AD 1590]. May Śrī Govinda be pleased by the praise of this [i.e. his temple] in verses.

This soul [Jīva i.e. Jīva Gosvāmī] must honor the two named Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana, the performers of service to the master of Śrī Vṛndāvana that was discontinued [because of] the Kali [age]. The end of Śrī Govindamandirāṣṭakam [eight verses praising Govinda's temple] written by Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī. In the year (V.S.) 1727 on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of Bhādra, Vaiṣṇavadāsa wrote it down in Kāmyavana.⁹²

In this inscription, both Akbar and Mānsingh are extensively glorified which is symptomatic of the favorable political environment that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community operated in during this era. Akbar is described by Jīva Gosvāmī as a ruler that facilitated the free practice of Vṛndāvana *bhakti* and Mānsingh his close aide is given credit for the fortune received in the form of the new Govindadeva temple. From this inscription, we also learn that Mānsingh engaged architects from Delhi, utilizing imperial resources to build the grand temple, which provides further evidence of the robust Kachvāhā-Mughal alliance. Jīva Gosvāmī closes by offering respects to his uncles, Rūpa and Sanātana, presenting himself as a follower of them. This inscription embodies the indebtedness that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school, led by Jīva Gosvāmī, held for the political regime that facilitated the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect's aspirations within Vṛndāvana.

⁹² Bahura, "Śrī Govinda Gāthā Service", p.201

Such praises for Akbar from Hindu sects seem to have been popular in this era, at times he was even likened to an avatar of Rāma. The royal courts even issued a translation of the Rāmāyana into Persian and the epic saga was also illustrated in Akbar's atelier.⁹³ Akbar's passion for inter-religious discourse was also well-known, exhibited by the erection of the 'House of Worship' or 'Ibadat Khana' where Akbar orchestrated debates and discussions between scholars from an assortment of traditions. Even Akbar's personal religious disposition, indicates a broad interest in a variety of religions. It has been claimed that after being apparently disillusioned with Islam, he adopted and configured an enigmatic practice known as Divine Religion or *Din-i Ilahi* during his reign. Although the exact nature of this ideology has been a matter of debates, it has often been considered an amalgamation of Islamic and Hindu creeds.⁹⁴ Thus, Akbar's accommodation of religious practices within his domain extended beyond merely the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school.

Akbar's ecumenical approach towards the conglomerate of religions in his domain has been presumed to have been unprecedented however it has also been claimed that it was rather an extension of the policy established by his predecessors such as Timur. In other words, he imitated a model of sacred authority displayed earlier in locations like Iran and Central Asia, which necessitated the king to adopt an impartial stance, transcending sectarian divisions, facilitating a proto-secularism in his domain.⁹⁵ Therefore, whatever the rulers' personal religious attitudes and distinctive partialities, they were expected to administer to the diverse audience that they governed. Consequently, Azfar Moin has suggested Akbar's stance must also be considered against the backdrop of sacred kingship that had been embodied earlier. Thus, this suggests that Akbar's accommodation and recognition of numerous religions was not necessarily only the culmination of his religious pursuits nor even necessarily a political maneuver to inspire his diverse nobility or a mechanism adopted to claim the numerous religious denominations that occupied his territory but rather possibly also an attempt to replicate traditional forms of kingship.⁹⁶

In this section, we observed that in the sixteenth century under the rule of Mughal emperor Akbar, Vṛndāvana undergoes extraordinary development initiated by various Vaiṣṇava reformers relocating to this site of pilgrimage. The political powerhouses of this era also played a vital role in the reestablishment of sites in relation to Kṛṣṇa. Although, it would be an

⁹³ Azfar, *The millennial sovereign*, p.166

⁹⁴ Azfar, *The millennial sovereign*, p.131-133

⁹⁵ Azfar, *The millennial sovereign*, p.20

⁹⁶ Azfar, *The millennial sovereign*, p.132

overstatement to claim that every aspect of Vṛndāvana's early development was born in relationship to state policy, nevertheless as documented the favorable political circumstances bore much fruit. Of all the temples and communities to benefit during this period, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect especially flourished due to Kachvāhā rulers such as Mānsingh but also benefitted from the contributions of other Hindu nobles like Todar Mal, these Hindu kings were principle members of Akbar's administration and continued to shed blood to serve the Mughal empire. Akbar's position as an impartial monarch with deep interests in syncretic creeds also enabled generous patronage that tremendously benefitted sects such as the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, exemplified by the construction of the splendid temple of Govindadeva in Vṛndāvana which appeared to be the chief product of the Mughal-Kachvāhā-Gauḍīya coalition.

Jahangir's Reign (1605-1627)

Akbar to Jahangir

Following the death of Akbar, Jahangir, the eldest son and heir to Akbar, assumed the Mughal throne, ruling the vast empire that Akbar had carved. Earlier in his life he was known as Muhammad Sultan Salim, however later he was more commonly known according to his imperial name, Jahangir, that person who is the seizer of the world. His rise to power was far from smooth, in 1600 due to his zest for power he initiated a rebellion against his own father. Subsequently, he established his own court, issued coins in his own name and embraced imperial epithets. Nevertheless, his efforts to overthrow Akbar were futile, although, he did successfully execute the assassination of Akbar's principle aid Abul Fazl. Eventually in 1604 due to the intervention of Jahangir's step-mothers and grandmother, both father and son were reunited and upon his death Akbar designated his son Salim as his preferred successor.⁹⁷

In general, despite rarely embarking on battles, Jahangir's reign as Mughal emperor was marked by its political stability. He was able to consolidate the impressive empire that Akbar had built, the empire's economy steadily grew and there were numerous cultural contributions born from his passion for art. The greatest threat to his sovereignty stemmed from rebellions initiated by his sons. Indeed, within the first year of his reign, his eldest son Khusrau plotted a rebellion, however the revolt was short-lived and Khusrau was imprisoned and blinded. A more severe judgement was imparted for his two-thousand accomplices who were executed for their parts in the uprising. Towards the end of his reign Jahangir faced another rebellion, on this occasion it was from his son Khurram who would later become Mughal ruler Shah Jahan. The rebellion stemmed from Jahangir's mounting affection for his wife Nur Jahan, as a result his son

⁹⁷ Azfar, *The millennial sovereign*, p.172

Khurram, fearing he would be deprived of the throne as rightful heir rebelled in 1622. The rebellion destabilized the empire in the concluding years of his rule.⁹⁸

Jahangir's alliance with the Kachvāhās

Jahangir's alliance with the Kachvāhās commenced during the reign of his father Akbar. In 1584, he was ceremoniously married to Man Bai, the daughter of Bhagavāndāsa, the son of Kachvāhā ruler Bhārmal as part of Akbar's strategy for fortifying political alliances with the Kachvāhās. The marriage ceremony featured both Hindu and Muslim rites reflecting the unification of the two dynasties. This marriage alliance strengthened the position of the Kachvāhā clan at the Mughal Court. Salim was also married to other daughters of Rājput ruling houses. This arrangement of marriages reflected Akbar's aspiration to preserve the union of Mughal-Rājput alliances to his expected successor to the throne, Prince Salim. Salim's family therefore featured Rājputs who inevitably influenced him from an early age.

Once Jahangir succeeded Akbar, the Rājputs continued to fare well for other reasons also. For instance, Rāja Vīrsingh Deva who had earlier killed Abul Fazl, Akbar's personal aide, upon Jahangir's request, was rewarded. Despite being Akbar's sworn enemy, the Bundelā Rājput, Vīrsingh Deva attained Jahangir's favor, being awarded the title *mahārāja*. He was granted ample imperial resources in his service to Jahangir as evidenced by his lavish expenditures on architectural projects. This was especially reflected in his domain, Orccha, where Rāja Vīrsingh Deva constructed a grand temple, known today as Caturbhujā. In addition, the Rāja built another impressive temple in Mathurā known as the Keśavadeva temple constructed from the generous sponsorship of the Mughal regime.⁹⁹

The Kachvāhās generally retained healthy relations with Jahangir, however, Mānsingh's relocation to govern in Bengal has sometimes been ascribed as punishment due to doubts over his allegiance to Jahangir displayed by his support of Khusrau during the rebellion. Furthermore, Mānsingh had become so influential that after Akbar's death, his son Jahangir's primary concern was how to counteract the general's influence at the court.¹⁰⁰ Mānsingh was later assigned to Bihar and eventually Jahangir sent him to join the efforts in the Deccan in 1608 to subdue Malik Ambar of the Ahmadnagar Sultanate. In the Deccan, Jahangir's forces were unable to penetrate

⁹⁸ Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p.100

⁹⁹ Pauwels, "A tale of two temples", p.282

¹⁰⁰ Alam Muzaffar and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World*, (New York, 2012), p.129

the frontier and Mānsingh eventually died while situated in the province in 1614.¹⁰¹ Following Mānsingh's death, Jahangir granted succession to his son Bhāvsingh. Bhāvsingh was gifted the title of *Mirza Rājah* and allocated the rank of 4000, which would increase to 5000 a few years later. Even though the Kachvāhās continued to fare well under the governance of the new Mughal emperor they were not able to attain the heights of influence nor the positions of that achieved during Akbar's regime. Bhāvsingh became a central member of the Mughal administration, yet he was unable to attain a status akin to his father nor his grandfather. Indeed, during the reign of Jahangir, respective rulers from the Rājput state attained at most *mansabs* of 5000, therefore although the Rājputs remained a significant part of Jahangir's court, they did not attain a stature of pre-eminence acquired during the reign of Akbar.¹⁰² Like his father, Bhāvsingh, was later sent to support the army's efforts in the Deccan in 1619. In this endeavor, he also died and the news of Bhāvsingh's death reached Jahangir at Hardwar in 1621, who awarded succession upon his nephew Jaisingh I, honoring him with the title Rāja and a rank of 2000. In 1623 Jahangir sent Jaisingh I to the Deccan, where he joined the empire's perpetual war with Malik Ambar. With the ascension of Jaisingh I, the Kachvāhā royal family entered a new phase of fortune and political influence within the empire.¹⁰³ Indeed, Jaisingh I's distinguished reign entailed participation in expansion efforts across numerous fronts of the Mughal empire. His reign as Kachvāhā ruler was extensive commencing with Jahangir, enduring throughout Shah Jahan's rule and spanned the first decade of Aurangzeb's reign.

Jahangir and Kachvāhā patronage of Vṛndāvana

Jahangir continued endorsing patronage for the temples of Vṛndāvana as dispensed by the earlier Mughal administration under Akbar's rule. In fact, in the reign of Jahangir, the grants issued to the temples were increased and improved. For instance, Todar Mal's previous grant of 100 *bighās* established in 1584 to the priest Gopal Dāsa of the Madana-Mohana temple was made permanent. Jahangir also added a further two temples to the original endowment list comprising of thirty-five temple grants created by Akbar's administration in 1598. His administration also added a *farman* in February 1612 granting 10 *bighās* to the *sevaka* of the temple Thakura Dwara at Vṛndāvana and in a *farman* issued in April 1613 they granted 15 *bighās* to the *sevaka* of Thakur Bhoja Sundara, a temple near Mathurā.¹⁰⁴ The regime also

¹⁰¹ Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.90

¹⁰² Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.76

¹⁰³ Jadunath Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.98

¹⁰⁴ Tarapada Mukherjee and Irfan Habib, *The Mughal Administration and the Temples of*

issued several grants to individuals in Vṛndāvana, and at times indicated ‘with sons’ which inferred that the grant should remain valid beyond the death of the named grantee, continuing to be issued to future successors from the family.¹⁰⁵ During Jahangir’s reign, the Kachvāhā family remained closely connected to Vṛndāvana especially the Govindadeva temple. After the construction of the grand temple, Mānsingh committed to a daily contribution of five rupees for the maintenance of the temple. By 1608 this was raised to nine rupees of which eight rupees were directed to maintain the temple and one rupee was assigned for the preservation of its priest Haridāsa.¹⁰⁶

Jahangir’s alliance with the Kachvāhās began at an early age, marked by his marriage to the daughter of Bhagavāndāsa during his father’s reign. Although the Kachvāhās continued to hold important positions in the Mughal court during Jahangir’s reign, nevertheless they were not able to attain the heights of influence that Bhagavāndāsa and Mānsingh had attained in the administration of Akbar. Jaisingh I became the foremost Kachvāhā king during the rule of Jahangir and his extensive reign led to a new period of fortune for the Kachvāhā clan and rejuvenated the special status of the Kachvāhās within the Mughal administration. Patronage for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples as established in the reign of Akbar continued without disruption and in specific cases was enhanced, thus the Kachvāhās continued to play a pivotal role in influencing the politics and patronage of North India.

Shah Jahan’s reign (1628-1658)

Jahangir to Shah Jahan

In 1592 Khurram was born and named by his grandfather Akbar, who was particularly fond of this grandson. Khurram would go on to become the Mughal ruler, popularly known as Shah Jahan, ‘the king of the world’. He was the third son of the Mughal emperor Jahangir, emerging victorious in the power struggle that ensued immediately after Jahangir’s death. He successfully attained the Mughal throne in 1628. As a response to the contriving acts of Jahangir’s favorite wife Nur Jahan, Shah Jahan instigated a rebellion in Jahangir’s reign with Rāja Mahal becoming his headquarters. However, after three years had lapsed Prince Khurram reconciled with his father Jahangir. Upon Jahangir’s death, Shah Jahan, with the support of the elders of the court, eliminated all rivals for the throne and was crowned Mughal emperor.¹⁰⁷ During his thirty-year

Vṛndavan during the Reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan, (Dharwad,1989), p. 288

¹⁰⁵ Mukherjee and Habib, *The Mughal Administration*, p.288

¹⁰⁶ Mukherjee and Habib, *The Mughal Administration*, p.289

¹⁰⁷ Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p.170

reign the Mughal empire expanded steadily, with his sons leading large armies on various frontiers. In contrast to his father, Shah Jahan excelled in martial arts and was responsible for military successes both as a prince and as an emperor. He led successful campaigns against Rana Amar Singh of Mewar and in the Deccan frontier. Indeed, Jahangir grateful for his efforts and in recognition of his success as a prince had awarded him the renowned title Shah Jahan. Shah Jahan also employed some of the world's finest architects, artists and craftsmen, and channeled vast imperial resources towards Mughal architecture and monuments across his empire. Most famous of which includes the new capital Shahjahanabad and the Taj Mahal at Agra which was a tomb for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal.¹⁰⁸

Some historians have also suggested that Shah Jahan was a devout advocate of Islamic purity. Thus, upon his ascension, he introduced policies that favored Muslims and proved to be detrimental for non-Muslims. For instance, in 1633, six years into his rule, Shah Jahan outlawed the construction or repair of temples and also ordered the demolition of newly built Hindu temples. However, Shah Jahan's partiality for his son Dara Shukoh, who championed the syncretic cultural harmony between all faiths, resembling his great-grandfather Akbar, suggest other aspects to Shah Jahan's attitude towards non-Muslims within his domain.¹⁰⁹

Shah Jahan's alliance with the Kachvāhās

Alliances with the Rājputs clans prevailed during the reign of Shah Jahan. Of all the Rājput houses the Kachvāhās continued to serve the Mughals loyally and therefore were rewarded for their efforts. The Kachvāhā ruler Jaisingh I ascended the throne of Amer in 1622, close to the conclusion of Jahangir's reign. Jaisingh I's reign concluded upon his death in 1667, ten years into Aurangzeb's rule. He was one of the foremost commanding nobles in the Mughal empire. While as a prince in revolt against his father Jahangir, Shah Jahan stated that he had always favored the Rājputs as key allies and he had informed Jaisingh I that he was as much a favorite with him as Mānsingh was with Akbar. Under Shah Jahan's rule, the Rājputs attained a special position in the Mughal courts reflected in the *mansabs* they were awarded. Rao Sur was awarded 4000, Rana Jagat Singh, Rāja Gaj Singh, Rao Ratan Hada were awarded the *mansabs* of 5000 and Kachvāhā king Jaisingh attained the highest *mansab* of 7000 along with Jaswantsingh.¹¹⁰

Jaisingh I was assigned several major tasks under the Mughal ruler Shah Jahan. In 1627, although Shah Jahan succeeded to take control of the Mughal empire, Khan Jahan, Jahangir's chief commander in Deccan, revolted against Shah Jahan. Consequently, Jaisingh I was tasked to

¹⁰⁸ Munis D. Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*, (New York, 2012), p.37

¹⁰⁹ Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p.169

¹¹⁰ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p. 78

pursue Khan Jahan till the general was killed in 1631. Soon afterwards Jaisingh I rejoined the Mughal mission in the Deccan till he was transferred to Afghanistan in 1638. Once there, he protected the north-western border of the empire till 1643 like his forefathers. In 1639, Jaisingh I was awarded the title of *Mizra Rāja* from Shah Jahan, the same title Mānsingh had received earlier. *Mizra Rāja* Jaisingh I was briefly reposted to the Deccan to protect the region till 1647. However, he was soon brought back to Afghanistan as king Shah Abbas II of Persia had conquered the fort of Qandahar, the frontier between Persia and Mughal Afghanistan in 1649. This was a major embarrassment for the Mughal empire, thus Shah Jahan sent a military legion to recover the area. Jaisingh I joined the Mughal campaigns for reclaiming the fort and was involved in three sieges till 1653 which ended without success.¹¹¹ During this challenging period, despite Jaisingh's relentless exertions during the sieges of Qandahar, his efforts went unnoticed due to a dispute with Dara Shukoh, Shah Jahan's favorite son. Nevertheless, he would soon receive retribution, for in 1657 at the end of Shah Jahan's reign came a turning point in the destiny of the Mughal empire, and Jaisingh I would prove to be pivotal in several feats including the defeat of Shuja, the capturing of Dara, neutralizing Jaswant and conquering Shivaji,¹¹² all of which were vital accomplishments for the forthcoming Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb.

Shah Jahan and Kachvāhā patronage of Vṛndāvana

In contrast to his great-grandfather Mānsingh, Jaisingh I focused his architectural efforts within his ancestral homes, subsequently we do not witness the construction of any temples or palaces outside Amer. Instead, he invested substantial resources in constructing a palace in Amer, however despite it being well underway by 1637, due to Shah Jahan's zest for architecture, the emperor had disseminated a decree stating that all works should cease on buildings as the imperial resources were required for tasks at the Mughal headquarters in Agra. Therefore, the Amer palace was finished later as reserves were redirected to the capital.¹¹³

The religious climate for non-Muslims during Shah Jahan's reign is generally portrayed to have been constrained in comparison to Akbar and Jahangir's reigns, and therefore less conducive for the Hindu populace.¹¹⁴ However, despite this claim it is difficult to ascertain categorically whether Shah Jahan was a less tolerant ruler in this regard. For instance, the reinstatement of the *jizya* tax has often been cited as evidence to his intolerance, however the tax was short-lived and quickly removed due to the petitioning of highly placed Hindu nobles.

¹¹¹ Okita, *Hindu theology*, p. 24-25

¹¹² Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.99-111

¹¹³ Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p.246

¹¹⁴ Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p.170

Six years into his reign, in 1633, Shah Jahan also issued a declaration that any temple which had commenced construction work in Jahangir's reign yet had not been finished would not be permitted to be completed, and subsequently in Kashmir, Gujarat, Allahabad, Orcha and Varanasi, temples were demolished. Some have claimed that there were several key developments around Shah Jahan that provoked such actions, his Rājput mother had died in 1619 and his intimate circle of advisors consisted of primarily orthodox *sunni* clergy.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, the destruction of temples was not necessarily symbolic of his animosity towards non-Muslims. For instance, in 1635 as a response to a rebellion orchestrated by Vīrsingh's son Jhūjharsingh, who had held a precarious relationship with Shah Jahan, the state of Orchha was attacked. This hostility stands out in contrast to the earlier robust Mughal-Bundelā alliance established between Vīrsingh and Jahangir. The drastic decline in relations resulted in the subsequent destruction of the Orcha temple.¹¹⁶ Likewise, Shah Jahan's demolition of the restored Chitor Fort by the Rāja of Mewar has sometimes been claimed to be another example of Hindu injustice, however it has also been alleged that this was a strategic act considering that earlier, the Rāja of Mewar had been a significant adversary of the Mughals and therefore Shah Jahan was reluctant to see him reinforce his defenses. The Rāja had also not acquired imperial permission for the renovations carried out. Therefore, the destruction of specific temples or estates connected to the Hindu nobles are claimed to have been motivated by the politics of the day as opposed to expressions of religious intolerance.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, irrespective of Shah Jahan's personal motivations, it must also be acknowledged that this period witnesses only a few notable temples being built in the empire apart from in Bengal which was a considerable distance from the imperial capital. Indeed, the vast majority of the structures erected by the Hindu populace were non-religious, such as domestic structures, palaces and so on, largely in their ancestral homes as in the case of Jaisingh I described earlier.¹¹⁸

In regard to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, all the grants issued previously continued unabated, however no further grants were issued under Shah Jahan's rule.¹¹⁹ The Mughal administration meticulously respected previously issued grants under Jahangir and Akbar, for instance, in 1633 *farmans* were issued to renew Akbar's previous grant of 170 *bighās* to temples such as Madana-Mohana. Furthermore, earlier in November 1632 following Jahangir's

¹¹⁵ Saha Shandip, *Creating a Community of Grace*, (Ottawa, 2004), p.177

¹¹⁶ Pauwels, "A tale of two temples", p.156

¹¹⁷ Catherine B.Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p.246

¹¹⁸ Catherine B.Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p.246

¹¹⁹ Mukherjee and Habib, *The Mughal Administration*, p.289

conversion of Todar Mal's grant into a permanent imperial grant, the regime facilitated the transfer of the grant to Gosaindas from the previous priest Śrī Chanda.¹²⁰ Therefore in this way, Shah Jahan preserved the grant protocols established in Akbar and Jahangir's reign. One can also infer that Jaisingh I's influential role in the Mughal administration on behalf of the Kachvāhā clan was a significant factor in the grants continuing uninterrupted.

Fascinatingly, under the rule of Shah Jahan, the Mughal administration extended its involvement beyond grant allocation to also help direct the managerial operations of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples. Specifically, the Mughal administration issued directives to increase Kachvāhā control over the managerial functions of the Govindadeva temple. This was primarily achieved by transferring the temple grants to the Amer house in 1633 rather than the temples directly. Consequently, Jaisingh I assumed control over the provision of a large portion of funds for the temples. A grant of 135 *bighās* was for instance assigned to Jaisingh I along with administrative control over the Govindadeva temple. This enabled him to nominate Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Cakravartī to supervise worship at the temple and in 1652 to remove the followers of Hari Govinda.¹²¹ In addition to maintaining the grants issued earlier and transferring the administrative power of temples, the Mughal administration also in some instances provided legitimization for the ritual processes undertaken within temple. For example, it is described in official Mughal documentation that the use of the loud gong within the Madana-Mohana temple complex was to be permitted as it was considered an indispensable feature of worship. Therefore, in this period we even notice imperial recognition and endorsement for the ceremonies of worship executed within temples.¹²²

In Shah Jahan's reign, Mughal participation in the management of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples, was encouraged and even in several cases deemed vital to resolve disputes that arose. Previously, according to Akbar's original farman in 1568 he vested administrative control of the Madana-Mohana and Govindadeva temples to Jīva Gosvāmī, and Jīva Gosvāmī in turn had passed control over to Kṛṣṇadāsa.¹²³ However, despite this resolution a dispute emerged between the lineages of Rūpa and Jīva. The alleged direct successors of Rūpa contended with the claim that Jīva and in turn Kṛṣṇadāsa were the rightful heirs. In response, the Mughal administration had to intercede and enforced the earlier *farman* directing that Kṛṣṇadāsa should assume administrative control of the two temples as ordained originally during the reign

¹²⁰ Mukherjee and Habib, *The Mughal Administration*, p.289

¹²¹ Mukherjee and Habib, *The Mughal Administration*, p.290

¹²² Mukherjee and Habib, *The Mughal Administration*, p.290

¹²³ Mukherjee and Habib, *The Mughal Administration*, p.290

of Akbar.¹²⁴ There were also other cases of Mughal participation that were deemed integral to support the interests of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava leaders in Vṛndāvana. For instance, in 1641 a group of village men unlawfully sold land originally belonging to Rūpa, Sanātana and Jīva Gosvāmī, subsequently the Mughal regime nullified the sale. Furthermore, in 1645, the headmen of Ariṭha¹²⁵ were accused of cutting down trees and blocking the path to the kuṇḍa, and once more the Mughal administration intervened to resolve the conflict.¹²⁶ From the examples shared, it is evident that the Mughal administration under Shah Jahan was perceived as indispensable for the protection of the established management protocols against disruptive forces and to resolve various conflicts that arose surrounding the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava estates and sites in Vṛndāvana.¹²⁷

In this section, it may be surmised that while the Kachvāhās remained valuable allies for the Mughals through Jaisingh I, nevertheless under Shah Jahan, much like during the reign of Jahangir, their influence in the governmental affairs of the empire weakened. Some have claimed that in Shah Jahan's reign, circumstances were less favorable for the Hindu nobles and populace, however it is difficult to definitely determine whether this was the case, considering factors such as the influence of his favorite son, the broadminded Dara Shukoh. Furthermore, motivations for such acts as temple destruction have sometimes been ascribed to political concerns as opposed to provoked by religious intolerance. Ironically, in the same year of the 1633 declaration, Shah Jahan also reissued grants for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples established during the rule of Akbar. The Mughal administration was also deemed imperative for upholding the managerial protocols and ownership of temples and sites belonging to the established Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava heirs in Vṛndāvana.

Aurangzeb's reign (1658-1707)

Shah Jahan to Aurangzeb

From 1658 until his death in 1707, Aurangzeb became the sixth Mughal ruler, and by far the most controversial figure in Mughal history. He was also the final ruler of the Mughal empire before its rapid decline from political dominion over the Indian subcontinent. During his reign, Aurangzeb engaged in almost perpetual warfare, assembling a large army he pursued military

¹²⁴ Irfan Habib, "Documentary History", in Margaret H. Case Ed., *Govindadeva: a dialogue in stone*, (New Delhi, 1996), p.132

¹²⁵ Also known as Rādhā Kuṇḍa

¹²⁶ Habib, "Documentary History", p.148

¹²⁷ Mukherjee and Habib, *The Mughal Administration*, p.291

expansion along all frontiers of his empire. Subsequently, he successfully expanded the Mughal empire's domain to the greatest extent so far, ruling most of the Indian subcontinent. His ascendancy to the Mughal throne however was not straightforward. Prior to being crowned ruler of the Mughal empire, his father Shah Jahan's health deteriorated and it was widely believed his death was imminent. Consequently, a battle ensued between Shah Jahan's four sons which included the king's favored heir, the oldest son Dara Shukoh. Shah Jahan never swayed in his promotion of Dara Shukoh and evidence of Dara Shukoh's favored status is clear, for instance, by 1657, in the concluding phase of Shah Jahan's rule, Dara Shukoh had been elevated to the exceptional rank of 50,000. In comparison, the aggregate ranking of his brothers Aurangzeb, Shuja and Murad was only 55,000. Furthermore, his brothers were continually tasked with assignments away from the imperial headquarters whereas Dara was largely based at the imperial court within close proximity to Shah Jahan.¹²⁸ Seven years prior to his eventual death, Shah Jahan's health severely deteriorated. Although he rapidly recovered within a brief period, nonetheless a war of succession ensued and was too far gone to halt. Aurangzeb emerged victorious, upon which he either imprisoned or killed his brothers. He even incarcerated his father upon recovery, declaring him controversially unfit to rule. Indeed, Shah Jahan lived for another seven years imprisoned inside the Agra fort which overlooked the Taj Mahal, where he was later buried beside his wife.¹²⁹

In the early years of his reign, Aurangzeb upheld many of the customs and practices inherited from the earlier emperors.¹³⁰ Aurangzeb also adopted the strategy of forming alliances to fortify the sovereign reach of the empire comparable to his predecessors such as Akbar. He retained good relations with the Rājputs and endeavored to procure further diplomatic alliances. For instance, the Maratha king Shivaji after having been defeated was summoned to Agra for reconciliation and attempts were made to employ him and his forces in the imperial regime. However, in this instance, the plan failed and Shivaji escaped to the Deccan, where he led an independent Maratha kingdom. Aurangzeb has also been criticized for his maltreatment of non-Muslims especially in comparison to his predecessors, exhibited by acts such as issuing decrees to desecrate temples in 1669 and reestablishing the *jizya*, a tax for non-Muslims in 1679.¹³¹ Aurangzeb's policies and approaches resulted in constant rebellions

¹²⁸ Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*, p.38

¹²⁹ Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p. 252

¹³⁰ Audrey Truschke, *The life and legacy of India's most controversial king*, (Stanford, 2017), p.41

¹³¹ Nath, "Śrī Govinda's Itinerary", p.163

and wars which led to the rapid depletion of the imperial treasury and army, and ultimately led to the beginning of the end of the Mughal empire's reign in the Indian subcontinent.

Aurangzeb's alliance with the Kachvāhās

Both Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb the leading sons of Shah Jahan, had been aligning themselves with nobles of the court in expectation of the inevitable war for succession. Kachvāhā ruler Jaisingh I and Jaswantsingh of Mewar were the leading Rājput kings at the time, and were in direct correspondence with both Aurangzeb and Dara Shukoh. Following in the footsteps of his Kachvāhā predecessors, Jaisingh I began his Mughal career in 1617 at the mere age of 12. Jaisingh I's accolades were numerous, experiencing successes in places as far as the Deccan and Central Asia. By 1637 his rank was raised to 5000 reflecting his accomplishments. However, despite his continued efforts and endeavors his rank was not increased further until after the civil war in 1657. In contrast, Jaswantsingh who was both junior in respect to age and career was conferred a rank of 7000 in early 1657. Jaisingh seemed to ascribe his lower rank to his precarious relationship with Dara, who amongst the princes exerted the greatest influence upon Emperor Shah Jahan. However, later in 1657 Jaisingh I's fortunes took a turn for the better and he was also bestowed a rank of 7000. This coincided with an assignment to escort Dara's eldest son Sulaiman Shukoh to capture Shuja, Shah Jahan's second son. As long as Shah Jahan occupied the throne, Jaisingh I continued to serve Dara dutifully, however, once the political tide shifted with Aurangzeb emerging victorious in the battle for succession, Jaisingh I sided with the new ruler and played a pivotal role in the capture of Dara. During this period of political upheaval, it appears that the Kachvāhās had no particular affinity for either Dara or Aurangzeb,¹³² nor did Aurangzeb have any reservations regarding the Kachvāhās at the time of accession, as witnessed from his efforts to form alliances with the Rājputs in general.¹³³

Jaisingh I became a principal ally for Aurangzeb from the very inauguration of the new emperor's reign. For instance, Jaisingh I was requested to negotiate with Jaswantsingh terms to desert Dara, offering him full pardon and reinstatement. Upon Aurangzeb assuming the throne, Dara was forced to flee in defeat. Jaisingh I was also tasked with pursuing Dara who had fled afar. Dara was eventually treacherously captured by an old ally of his, a Baluch chief named Malik Jiwan and presented to the presiding emperor. After transferring the captive Dara Shukoh to Delhi, Jaisingh I returned later from Sindh, with his army who were exhausted from the

¹³² The Hindu nobles in general evenly supported both Dara and Aurangzeb. More Rājputs supported Dara, whereas more Marathas sided with Aurangzeb. Precisely 24 Hindu nobles sided with Dara and 21 supported Aurangzeb. (Truschke, *India's most controversial king*, p.56)

¹³³ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.81-83

pursuit. Once, Jaisingh I arrived in Delhi he opted not to partake in the debates at the royal court which concluded in a verdict to proceed with Dara's execution. He also chose to not be an audience member to the humiliating public parade of the defeated Prince. The veteran Kachvāhā king was rewarded handsomely for his tremendous efforts. He had already attained the rank of 7000 which could not be exceeded unless one was of royal blood.¹³⁴

Jaisingh I who had led the Kachvāhās from the reign of Jahangir, had achieved feats of heroism and military success in practically every part of the Mughal empire. A pivotal episode occurred in 1664, as he was assigned the challenging task of subduing the Maratha king Shivaji, whose exploits had baffled every general that had challenged him. Indeed, this had frustrated Aurangzeb who had described Shivaji as a 'mountain rat' and a disruptive rebel who resided in the hills.¹³⁵ Shivaji's defying acts which embarrassed the Mughal regime included the killing of the Mughal noble Afzal Khan and wounding Aurangzeb's maternal uncle Shaista Khan.¹³⁶ He also managed to kill one of Aurangzeb's sons and plundered the wealthy city of Surat for four continuous days in 1664. At the senior age of fifty-five Jaisingh I embarked on this perplexing task, hoping to subdue a petty lord who in less than ten years succeeded in defying the Mughal regime.¹³⁷

Remarkably through his military expertise, in the span of only three months Jaisingh I succeeded in forcing Shivaji to concede and publically acknowledge the supremacy of the Mughal empire. This brought great joy to the Emperor and once again Jaisingh I was rewarded for his efforts. Although Shivaji had been defeated, Jaisingh I had a far grander plan. He hoped this setback for Shivaji would lead to him becoming a principal ally for the Mughal emperor just as his family had been for many years. Therefore, Jaisingh I implored Shivaji to visit the court of Akbar. To entice Shivaji he assured him that he would be the recipient of great rewards and would receive recognition for his service to the empire. Nevertheless, Shivaji and his comrades resisted due to their distrust of the Mughals. They finally relented as Jaisingh went to great lengths to assure the safety of Shivaji, even assigning his very own son Rāmsingh to be the caretaker of Shivaji during this visit. Thus, Jaisingh I advocated a policy of befriending Shivaji and of utilizing his services. Unfortunately, however Aurangzeb never fully appreciated his strategy. Due to a combination of Aurangzeb's neglect and Rāmsingh's carelessness, Shivaji felt insulted during his visit to Aurangzeb's court, jeopardizing Jaisingh's diplomatic efforts and transforming

¹³⁴ Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.118-121

¹³⁵ James Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu king in Islamic India*, (Oxford, 2003), p.4

¹³⁶ Laine, *Shivaji*, p.24-25

¹³⁷ Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.123-127

the Maratha king into Aurangzeb's bitterest enemy.¹³⁸

During Shivaji's visit to Aurangzeb's court a series of incidents occurred that severed the fragile relations between Shivaji and the Mughal emperor. Firstly, Shivaji felt slighted for having been seated in a section reserved for lower nobles in the audience hall. Furthermore, when Shivaji came before Aurangzeb he was neglected as Aurangzeb became preoccupied with other matters that were of concern. These insults coupled with Jaswantsingh being bestowed a higher rank than Shivaji, greatly disturbed him, leading him to be vocal about his qualms in the court. Observing Shivaji's disturbed state Aurangzeb requested Rāmsingh to remove Shivaji from the court and to escort him back to his quarters to reason with him. However, it proved to be impossible to appease him and hence other court nobles became hostile towards him and urged the emperor to punish him by killing or imprisoning him, as the prestige of the empire was at stake. Shaista Khan also reminded Aurangzeb of Shivaji's treacherous nature and warned Aurangzeb not to provide him a private audience as he could be assassinated.¹³⁹ Rāmsingh had been entrusted by his father with the responsibility of hosting Shivaji, therefore he protested recollecting his father's pledge to Shivaji. While the emperor was considering how to proceed, Shivaji was confined to his tent under house arrest, close to Rāmsingh's camp, which was continually patrolled. Jaisingh I was placed in a dilemma by the unforeseen aftermath of Shivaji's visit to the court. He struggled to convince the emperor that by killing or imprisoning Shivaji the empire would certainly not benefit. Whilst Aurangzeb was pondering his options, Shivaji growing restless was also evaluating his options and eventually devised a plot for his own escape. He firstly sent away his comrades and servants, to ensure their safety. A short time later he feigned illness and as a tribute to his betterment he sent out sweetmeats every evening to *brahmins*. At first the guards checked the baskets regularly, however then allowed them to pass unchecked. Shivaji capitalized on this opportunity and along with his son slipped into two baskets that were safely sent out. The baskets were deposited outside the city, from there Shivaji and his son proceeded to Mathurā in disguise. They continued to their home in the mountains of Maharashtra, however to deceive his pursuers, Shivaji strategically took a longer path going via Benares concealed as a pilgrim, assisted by *brahmins* on this journey.¹⁴⁰ Following this escape the emperor's suspicions fell upon Rāmsingh and the Kachvāhās in general, who had assumed responsibility of Shivaji. As an immediate response Rāmsingh was forbidden from the court, his rank was reduced by one thousand and his estates were removed. It was only seven

¹³⁸ Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.123-127

¹³⁹ Laine, *Shivaji*, p.26

¹⁴⁰ Laine, *Shivaji*, p.29

months later that Rāmsingh was allowed to reenter the court upon the intercession of Jaswantsingh in 1667. During this period Jaisingh I also encountered frustration in breaching the Deccan area, this became a further source of frustration for Aurangzeb, who also held him partly responsible for his son's role in Shivaji's escape. After Jaisingh's retirement from the Deccan, he was recalled to the court and Prince Muzzam assisted by Jaswantsingh were tasked with penetrating the Deccan. Jaisingh I's brilliant career which had spanned the reign of three Mughal emperors was tainted by these disappointing endings. Broken hearted from the setback and suffering in old age, Jaisingh I died in 1667.¹⁴¹ After Jaisingh I's death in 1667, no longer was the alliance with Kachvāhās as intimate nor as strong as it once was, and hence commenced a testing period for the Mughal-Kachvāhā alliance.

Following the death of Mizra Rāja Jaisingh, Rāmsingh became the subsequent king of Amer and ruler of the Kachvāhā clan. Between the years of 1667-1676 Rāmsingh was directed to serve the empire in Assam. Warfare in Assam was extremely unpopular and no soldier would go there unless compelled. Therefore, it was thought by some that Rāmsingh's sentence to Assam was further punishment for his role in Shivaji's escape. Rāmsingh's efforts there were inevitably futile and he left in deep disappointment. During this period Rāja Jaswantsingh while serving as protector of the Khyber Pass, died there in 1678.¹⁴² Thus, Rāmsingh became the most prominent Rājput king and he was assigned to be warden of the Khyber Pass in Afghanistan, under Amir Khan. In 1682, Rāmsingh received the tragic news that his only son Kishan Singh had died. Shortly after which, Rāmsingh himself also died, leaving the fate of the Kachvāhā dynasty in jeopardy. Bishansingh his grandson became the Kachvāhā ruler in 1688. He spent much of his time within the Mathurā district engaged in warfare with the *Jāṭs*. Aurangzeb was continually disappointed with Bishansingh's lack of success and had him removed as governor of Mathurā and looked to Bishansingh's son, Jaisingh II for hope. With the ascendancy of Jaisingh II, the Kachvāhā dynasty enters another prosperous period comparable to only Mānsingh or Jaisingh I's early reign. The thirty-two years before Jaisingh II had been a difficult time for the Kachvāhās, however, the new ruler became a beacon of light for the Kachvāhā clan emerging from this period of darkness.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.130-143

¹⁴² Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.145-148

¹⁴³ Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.149-156

Aurangzeb's desecration of Vṛndāvana temples

The rapid decline in relations between the Mughals and Kachvāhās during Aurangzeb's reign as well as Aurangzeb's ostensibly growing anti-Hindu stance¹⁴⁴ triggered a detrimental impact upon the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community and the temples in Vṛndāvana. The prosperity and stability that Vṛndāvana experienced during the sixteenth century would eventually come to a halt during the reign of Aurangzeb in the mid-seventeenth century.

In the initial phase of his reign Aurangzeb continued to preserve the grants and management protocols established in temples in Vṛndāvana in the same way as his predecessors. For instance, in 1659 following the stipulation introduced by his father Shah Jahan, which entailed reallocating control of the Govindadeva temple to the Amer family, in light of a dispute surrounding the Govindadeva temple, Aurangzeb referred the matter to the discretion of the then Kachvāhā ruler, Jaisingh I. A temple priest known as Kṛṣṇadāsa had been assigned to manage the affairs and possessions of Jīva Gosvāmī, which included administration

¹⁴⁴ Aurangzeb's stance on the Hindu populace has been a point of contention. For example, Jadunath Sarkar's states that Aurangzeb seized the opportunity presented by the death of the foremost Rājput ruler, Jaswantsingh and Rāmsingh's absence due to his assignment in Assam, and the general decline of Rājput influence in the Mughal regime. Thus, he issued orders to reinstate the *jizya* tax in 1679 and to reinvigorate the decree of 1669 to destroy 'all temples and places of religious instruction of the Hindus.' (Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.148) However, Aurangzeb's anti-hindu stance has been debated and a recent defence of this claim can be found in Audrey Truschke work on Aurangzeb. In the text, she presents numerous opposing points to counter this popular view. For instance, she argues that under Akbar, Hindus comprised 22.5% of all Mughal nobles in the administration. And in the first 21 years of Aurangzeb's reign between 1658-79 it remained at the level of 21.6%. However, between 1679-1707 the Hindu noble members increased by almost 50%, rising to 31.6% of the Mughal nobility. The dramatic rise is ascribed to the recruitment of Marathas as part of the expansion strategy in the Deccan (Truschke, *India's most controversial king*, p.56) Furthermore, Ali Athar, states that in the early period of Aurangzeb's rule, he endeavoured to form alliances with the Rājput leaders, even rewarding them with *mansabs* up to 7000. However, later he seemed to be reluctant to promote the Rājputs, and tried to reduce the Hindu nobles in the court. Nevertheless, in the second period the emperor was engaged in expanding the empire in the Deccan consequently he was forced to recruit 'Deccanis', which included Marathas who proved to be valuable in the Deccan wars. Aurangzeb had mixed successes with the Marathas who were far less reliable in their loyalty to the empire, which contrasted the Rājputs. In the second period of his rule, North India seems to have become less important than the South, hence even though the Hindu nobles increased in the administration, the Rājputs become less important, now outnumbered by the Marathas. (Athar, *The Mughal nobility under Aurangzeb*, p.22-32)

of the Govindadeva temple. However, he was accused of attaining that position by deception, consequently a *farman* was issued by Jaisingh I to appoint Śivarāma as the preferred caretaker of the Govindadeva deity. From then on Śivarāma considered the land his own. Thus, Jaisingh I used his imperial influence to issue the order that the lands and retreats of Jīva Gosvāmī should be under the custodianship of Śivarāma.¹⁴⁵

Aurangzeb's oppressive actions within Vṛndāvana commenced substantially in 1665, seven years into his reign, which coincides with the episode of Shivaji's escape, in which the Kachvāhās were considered chief culprits, particularly Jaisingh I's son, Rāmsingh. With the diminishing power of the Rājputs in the Mughal empire and Aurangzeb's general disappointment with them, Aurangzeb seems to have adopted an alternative direction in his political strategy. Aurangzeb's actions in Vṛndāvana also provoked the tough *Jāt* peasants under their leader Gokulā to rise in revolt. Consequently, Vṛndāvana was constantly ablaze from April 1669 to January 1670. During this period, Mathurā and Vṛndāvana were even renamed to Islamabad and Muminabad, although in reality the new names were only ever used in official documentation.¹⁴⁶ In January 1670 Aurangzeb also ordered the demolition of the renowned Keśavadeva temple of Mathurā.¹⁴⁷ The temple was a grand monument necessitating excessive efforts from Aurangzeb's soldiers to accomplish the demolition.¹⁴⁸ The demolition of this temple followed a decree to desecrate temples in 1669 by Aurangzeb. Sāql Mustad Kahn, a contemporary historian of Aurangzeb's reign recorded that on April 1669 his majesty 'eager to establish Islam, issued orders to the governors to demolish the schools and temples of the infidels and with the utmost urgency put down the teaching and the public practice of the religion of these misbelievers.'¹⁴⁹ However, to counter claims that an anti-Hindu sentiment was the primary motivation inciting the destruction of temples witnessed in this period, other

¹⁴⁵ Habib, "Documentary History", p.148

¹⁴⁶ Saha, *Creating a Community of Grace*, p.271

¹⁴⁷ This Mathurā temple site has become the focus of contention in recent times. Right wing Hindu group such as the VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad) have petitioned for the mosque to be destroyed on the Kṛṣṇa Janmabhūmi site, in response to Aurangzeb's destruction of the temple and replacement with a mosque. However, many scholars have endeavored to explain that the motivations behind such destruction were not simply religiously in orientation. I have outlined some of the arguments in this chapter. [For more scholarship on this matter consult Heidi Pauwels: Pauwels, "A tale of two temples" p.147 and also see Eaton, Richard, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States in Medieval India*, (Gurgaon, 2004)]

¹⁴⁸ Nath, "Śrī Govinda's Itinerary", p.163

¹⁴⁹ Nath, "Śrī Govinda's Itinerary", p.163

perspectives have been put forwarded. For instance, it has been claimed that the policy to cease construction of new temples was not introduced by Aurangzeb but was rather the continuation of a policy already in practice under his father, Shah Jahan. Furthermore, the destruction of temples in numerous instances were temples which were akin to symbols of political power, and thus the demolition was deemed to be necessary acts of retaliation for cases of aggression exhibited against the empire. For example, the destruction of the Keśavadeva temple in Mathurā was declared to be reprisal for the troublesome *Jāt* rebellions in the Mathurā area.¹⁵⁰ It has also been claimed that the destruction of this temple was judged to be retaliation for the *brahmins* in Mathurā who had provided aid to Shivaji and his son in their controversial escape. Other reasons have also been ascribed to the link between the temple and Aurangzeb's rival brother Dara Shukoh who had sponsored the stone railings of the construction.¹⁵¹ Hence, several alternative explanations have been postulated that demonstrate that the demolition of the temple entailed complexities to Aurangzeb's policies that perhaps contrasts popular opinions.¹⁵²

In this period, in 1679, the *jizya* tax was also revived for all non-Muslims. Aurangzeb's motivations for reintroducing the *jizya* tax have also been debated. Jadunath Sarkar has argued that the emperor's motive was to encourage non-Muslims to convert to Islam which would eventually lead to a nation-wide Islamic state.¹⁵³ However, others such as Satish Chandra have suggested that the purpose behind the tax was far more nuanced and stated that the reinstatement of the *jizya* tax was a political and ideological move to develop his personal brand to remodel himself as an orthodox Muslim king.¹⁵⁴ He expected this shift would help rally Muslim support, not only in conflicts with the Rājputs and the Marathas but also in his battles with the Muslim kingdoms in Deccan. The reestablishment of the *jizya* tax certainly magnified the divide between the Mughals and the Hindu nobles such as the Rājputs and the Marathas, and accelerated the fragmentation of the empire. However, it has been claimed that Aurangzeb had no alternative than to appeal to the loyalty of the orthodox Muslim branch considering the

¹⁵⁰ Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p. 254

¹⁵¹ Pauwels, "A tale of two temples" p.157

¹⁵² During this period, the Viśvanātha temple was also demolished in 1669, which had been built by the Kachvāhā king Mānsingh. This has also been claimed to have been a response to Shivaji's escape, coupled with the Benares landlords instigating a rebellion. (Truschke, *India's most controversial king*, p.84)

¹⁵³ Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.148

¹⁵⁴ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.181

ever-increasing mounting opposition to the empire from the Hindu populace.¹⁵⁵ Earlier he had appealed to the same orthodox group as he executed Dara and imprisoned Murad on the premise of them having transgressed Islamic laws. Another perspective expounded stated that he was forced to introduce the tax due to a serious depletion in funds expended due to his constant battles. Consequently, the *jizya* tax was only introduced twenty-one years after he came to power to replenish the imperial treasury. Interestingly, in spite of the tax being instilled there is no evidence of its imposition leading to conversions.¹⁵⁶

Considering that Vṛndāvana became a target of Aurangzeb's wrath, the ramifications for the Govindadeva temple are insightful being one of the grandest temples in North India. Furthermore, the deity was especially valued by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect being founded by sect leader in Vṛndāvana, Rūpa Gosvāmī and also became a symbol of Kachvāhā power in North India. Amidst the devastation in Vṛndāvana, intriguingly, the temple was not demolished but only partially desecrated. When a construction was demolished under the instructions of Aurangzeb the party that was dispatched to fulfil the task would report back the resources utilized to undertake the task. Such reports exist for temples in Mathurā and Varanasi, however not for the Govindadeva temple. Considering the close bond between the Govindadeva temple and the Kachvāhā family, since the reign of Akbar, it could be inferred that the treatment of the Govindadeva temple reflected Aurangzeb's own dwindling alliance with the Kachvāhās. Therefore, the desecration of the temple has been attributed as a fitting reprisal for the Kachvāhās due to Aurangzeb's suspicions of Rāmsingh's involvement in Shivaji's escape. It also appears that completely destroying the Govindadeva temple would have entirely severed ties between the Kachvāhās and the Mughals leading to the Kachvāhā family pitted against the Mughals. Along with his other numerous enemies, the situation would have been extremely intolerable and untenable for Aurangzeb, therefore he may have deemed partial demolition of the temple to be fitting punishment.¹⁵⁷

According to Fergusson's *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* the Govindadeva temple's upper parts are claimed to have been torn down by Aurangzeb, 'who is said to have erected... a place for Muslim prayer on the roof'.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, many of the figures in the doorway have been carefully defaced. There even appears to be an image of a figure's

¹⁵⁵ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.170

¹⁵⁶ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.172

¹⁵⁷ Gosvāmī, "Lotus in Stone", p.271-272

¹⁵⁸ John Burton-Page, "Hindu-Muslim Synthesis", in Margaret H. Case Ed., *Govindadeva: a dialogue in stone*, (New Delhi, 1996), p.125

mutilated head with a Turkish turban, which could have been Akbar as the image is larger than the others.¹⁵⁹ Its inner sanctum which housed the deity and was therefore its most sacred portion was virtually demolished. In addition, smaller shrines contained within this great compound were also destroyed.¹⁶⁰ This once important place of pilgrimage and former symbol of robust Mughal-Kachvāhā-Gauḍīya relations was left severely damaged and desolate during the reign of Aurangzeb, reflecting the deterioration in these political alliances. In the same way, former Kachvāhā ruler Mānsingh's famous Viśvanātha temple in Benares was also demolished as retaliation for Kachvāhā involvement in Shivaji's escape. Such temples had been constructed using Mughal resources and were symbols of Kachvāhā prestige, therefore in response to apparently violating long established allegiances, the prized possessions of the Kachvāhās were targets of destruction.¹⁶¹

In this difficult period, despite the attacks encountered on their temples, the Kachvāhās still strived to remain the protectors of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava deities such as Govindadeva. For instance, the Kachvāhās collaborated with the priests of the Govindadeva temple to provide safe passage for the deity prior to the desecration of the temple. A letter from Rāmsingh to his minister in 1671 records that Govindadeva was transported to Kāmān arriving from Vṛndāvana. The minister was requested to arrange further provisions for the deity's safe passage to Govindapura(Rūpaheda). Nevertheless, Govindadeva was not taken immediately and appeared to have remained in Kāmān for a further four years¹⁶². Indeed, the Govindadeva deity never returned to Vṛndāvana. One plausible reason provided was that after the death of Jaisingh I in 1667, the Kachvāhās would not be able to ensure the protection of the deity from the destruction of the Mughal rulers in Vṛndāvana. Consequently, the priests were keen to relocate Govindadeva to a more secure and distant location like Govindagadha, where the images could be concealed within a fort and the greater distance from Vṛndāvana further ensured protection.¹⁶³ From here, Govindadeva was eventually taken to Amer, the homeland of the Kachvāhās in 1714. However, it wasn't just Govindadeva amongst the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava deities that was relocated to ensure protection. For example, Rādhā-damodara, the deities of Jīva Gosvāmī, eventually moved to Jaipur and the deity of Sanātana Gosvāmī, Madana-Mohana was taken to Karauli in 1728 by Rāja Gopalsingh, a brother in law of Jaisingh II, who went on to

¹⁵⁹ Shrivatsa Gosvāmī, "Iconography of Govindadeva", in Margaret H. Case Ed., *Govindadeva: a dialogue in stone*, (New Delhi, 1996), p.69-70

¹⁶⁰ Nath, "Śrī Govinda's Itinerary", p.164

¹⁶¹ Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p.254

¹⁶² Nath, "Śrī Govinda's Itinerary", p.168-169

¹⁶³ Bahura, "Śrī Govinda Gāthā Service", p.204

construct a temple for the deities opposite his palace.¹⁶⁴ However, Gopal Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī's deities of Rādhā-Rāman due to their smaller size, appeared to have remained concealed in Vṛndāvana. As there was no temple established for the deity as of yet to attract the attention of the Mughals, the deities were hidden. The deity of Banke-Bihārī also remained concealed in Vṛndāvana during this period. The image of Rādhā-Vallabha worshipped by the Rādhā-Vallabhite community was transferred to Kāmān and remained there before being returned to Vṛndāvana in the late eighteenth century. This period impacted Vṛndāvana radically, many images that had departed from Vṛndāvana for safety never returned to the area again. By the end of the eighteenth century Vṛndāvana had transformed drastically, initiated by the faltering Mughal-Kachvāhā alliance. Indeed, no longer would Vṛndāvana attain the same fortunes that it once enjoyed under the Mughal empire.¹⁶⁵

Demise of Aurangzeb and rise of Kachvāhā king Jaisingh II

Aurangzeb's reign was characterized by his continual warfare, especially with the Marathas and the conquest of Deccan. This endeavor drove his empire to the brink of bankruptcy, as Stanley Wolpert describes:

The conquest of the Deccan, to which Aurangzeb devoted the last 26 years of his life, was in many ways a Pyrrhic victory, costing an estimated hundred thousand lives a year during its last decade of futile chess game warfare. The expense in gold and rupees can hardly be accurately estimated. Aurangzeb's encampment was like a moving capital— a city of tents 30 miles in circumference, with some 250 bazaars, with a 1/2 million camp followers, 50,000 camels and 30,000 elephants, all of whom had to be fed, stripped the Deccan of any and all of its surplus grain and wealth ... Not only famine but bubonic plague arose ... Even Aurangzeb, had ceased to understand the purpose of it all by the time he was nearing 90 ... 'I came alone and I go as a stranger. I do not know who I am, nor what I have been doing,' the dying old man confessed to his son, Azam, in February 1707.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Entwistle, *Braj Centre of Kṛṣṇa Pilgrimage*, p.185

¹⁶⁵ Saha, *Creating a Community of Grace*, p.103

¹⁶⁶ Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India*, (Oxford, 2008), p.167

As well as great resources being lost owing to constant warfare, the empire was in disarray, accelerated by his inability to settle issues in his provinces.¹⁶⁷ As Aurangzeb's reign was coming to an end with a crumbling Mughal empire, Sawai Jaisingh II inherited the throne of Amer in 1699 ruling till 1743. Despite being very young he played a pivotal role in the politics of North India. Quickly, he established himself as a critical member of Aurangzeb's court, assisting the emperor in numerous ways, including subduing the *Jāṭs*. Subsequently, the emperor awarded him with gifts and honorary titles. His younger son Shiv Singh was also promoted and assigned governor of Mathurā, and deputized for his father as Governor of Agra. Jaisingh II also used his influence to benefit the Hindu community. For instance, in 1720 he convinced Aurangzeb's son Muhammad Shah to eradicate the *jizya* tax and he petitioned for the pilgrimage tax for visitors to holy places to be also abolished.¹⁶⁸

After Aurangzeb's demise Jaisingh II's fortunes took a turn for the worse. Upon Bahadur Shah's victory in the war of succession, he ordered that Jaisingh II and his army should be removed from Amer, reasoning that Jaisingh II had previously supported his foe Muhammad Azam Shah. Consequently, Bahadur Shah situated himself in Amer for three days, removing Jaisingh II and renamed the city to Islamabad. Vijaysingh, Jaisingh's younger brother replaced him and was positioned as *zamindar* of Amer with the city remaining in the tight grip of the Mughal empire. However, Jaisingh's exile didn't last long. While Bahadur was preoccupied in the Deccan, Jaisingh formed an alliance with the Rājput kingdoms of Mewar and Marwar, whom together ousted the Mughals in Rājput. In this way Jaisingh II was able to recapture Amer. Differences between Jaisingh II and the Mughals were later resolved, consequently Jaisingh II was appointed governor of Agra and Malwa, and he received a *mansab* of 7000. Thus, the Kachvāhās were once again reinstated as key allies of the Mughal regime.¹⁶⁹

After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, numerous conflicts emerged, which contributed to the breakdown of the Mughal regime, and the once formidable empire gradually became more and more fractured. This period witnessed a rise in rebellions and a trend to openly assert one's independence from the empire as regional leaders.¹⁷⁰ Therefore uprisings emerged amongst the Zamindars in Bengal and Bihar, and the provincial leaders such as the Rājputs, Sikhs and Afghans who became less obedient to the Mughal ruler.¹⁷¹ After the death of

¹⁶⁷ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.98

¹⁶⁸ Sarkar, *A history of Jaipur*, p.225

¹⁶⁹ Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p.99-101

¹⁷⁰ Monika Horstmann, *In Favour of Govindadevji*, (New Delhi, 1999), p.17

¹⁷¹ Fatima Ahmad Imam, *Institutionalizing Rajadharma*, (Toronto, 2008), p.11

Aurangzeb in 1707, Jaisingh II had set his sights on constructing a new power base representative of a rejuvenated Kachvāhā power. It was hoped that the new city would have a robust religious and intellectual foundation, and the deity of Govindadeva, which had been the object of devotion for the Kachvāhās since the time of Bhārmal, would lie at the heart of the new city. The revival of the Kachvāhās would also be reflected in the rejuvenated status of Govindadeva, a longtime symbol of Kachvāhā prestige. Consequently, Govindadeva's status evolved from the family deity of the Kachvāhās to becoming the presiding state deity of their new capital city, Jaipur. The residence of Govindadeva in Jaipur was known as the *Govinda Mahala* or palace instead of *Mandira* or temple. This implies that Govindadeva was now the tutelary deity of the Kachvāhās, virtually given the status of sovereign of the state. Jaisingh dedicated the new city to Govindadeva and constantly sought refuge of the deity, evidenced by the inscription of his official seal which states: 'Savai Jaisingh II has found shelter at the feet of Govindadevaji', which his descendants have observed to this day. This episode marks the culmination of the Kachvāhā's dedication to Govindadeva which began with Rāja Bhārmal approximately 150 years earlier, who awarded the first land grant to Govindadeva in Vṛndāvana.¹⁷²

In summary, this section begins by describing the contribution of Jai Singh I who continued to support the empire faithfully in the opening of Aurangzeb's rule, having served the Mughal regime throughout the reign of Shah Jahan, wherein he negotiated an alliance with Jaswantsingh, played a vital role in the capture of Dara and even overcame Shivaji to aid the expansion of the Mughal empire. However, his policy to befriend Shivaji backfired and weakened the once strong alliance with Aurangzeb, who never fully appreciated the genius of his strategy. Aurangzeb became further dissatisfied with the Kachvāhā efforts, accentuated by their suspected participation in the escape of Shivaji. This was reflected in the treatment of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples in Vṛndāvana connected to the Kachvāhās. During this challenging period, the Kachvāhā clan continued to strive to protect Govindadeva by providing safe passage and harbor during the attack. As the Mughal empire deteriorated during the end of Aurangzeb's reign, Savai Jaisingh II at a tender age emerged as the new leader of the Kachvāhā dynasty in 1699. After over thirty years of toil for the family, the Kachvāhās entered an era of political stability and growth. Jaisingh II pioneered the creation of a new Kachvāhā state with Govindadeva at the heart of his new city, Jaipur. It also marks the apex of the Kachvāhā efforts to support Govindadeva, beginning from Rāja Bhārmal who ensured the first land grant for

¹⁷² Nath, 'Śrī Govinda's Itinerary', p.180

Govindadeva, to his grandson Mānsingh who leveraged Mughal resources to construct a momentous monument for Govindadeva.

Conclusion

Despite the long-standing historical connection of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* to Vṛndāvana, places of pilgrimage relating to Kṛṣṇa did not dominate the area until the early sixteenth century. Prior to the sixteenth century, historical sites within Vṛndāvana appear lost, furthermore, numerous raids upon Mathurā also obscure the matter further. Local *bhakti* traditions and archaeological excavations also indicate that Vṛndāvana was all but barren of pilgrimage sites of Kṛṣṇa until Vaiṣṇava reformers such as Caitanya and Vallabha arrived in Vṛndāvana in the sixteenth century.

This period of transformation in Vṛndāvana was initially prompted by communities such as the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal, some of whom settled in Vṛndāvana with the purpose of rediscovering the land of Kṛṣṇa. Nevertheless, they were not alone in this endeavor, the political powers of the day provided significant patronage to support the ambition and vision that these saints held. The favorable political situation and stability proved to be crucial in order for Vṛndāvana to flourish with new temples emerging and a steady source of patronage was granted for the maintenance of temples and priests. This remarkable situation under the Mughal regime allowed Hindu royalty to participate in their traditional duties as Hindu rulers and yet remain committed to the Mughal establishment. The rediscovery of Vṛndāvana coincided with the demise of the Sultanate and the advent of the Mughal empire.

In this extraordinary era, we notice the Kachvāhā rulers and those in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community adapting to the socio-political and economic changes that emerged with the ascendancy of the Mughal regime. Although there were numerous successes with this new-found Mughal-Kachvāhā coalition, for a variety of reasons, the Mughal-Kachvāhā union did not fulfill its potential. The intimate relationship between these two dynasties developed to support political ambitions, however when the political circumstances changed either due to ambitions being met or rulers of the dynasties changing, the alliance waned. The Mughal interest in the Kachvāhās was based largely on the utility and resources offered by the rulers to the empire. Therefore, the alliance grew and waned according to the efficacy of the Kachvāhā ruler that occupied the throne at Amer. Cooperation between the two political dynasties also required an empire that was multi-religious in character. Although high ideals were established by Akbar, it seems later Mughal emperors were not able to retain the same poly-religious culture as evidenced with the introduction of decrees to demolish temples under Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, even if though such declarations were often issued spurred by political interests.

As the Mughal-Kachvāhā alliance fluctuated, as political players came and went, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples like Govindadeva in Vṛndāvana faced prosperity and threats accordingly. There appeared to be a direct correspondence between the strength of the Mughal-Kachvāhā coalition and the fortunes experienced by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples. Akbar's era was a golden period for this alliance, which saw the Kachvāhās promoted to the highest positions in the Mughal court particularly through Mānsingh and Bhagavāndāsa. This was reflected in the prosperity witnessed in various parts of Vṛndāvana exemplified by the erection of an impressive temple for Govindadeva. In the subsequent reigns of Shah Jahan and Jahangir, although the Amer family didn't attain the same positional heights of that witnessed in Akbar's rule, nevertheless they remained crucial contributors in the empires that followed. This was especially illustrated by Jaisingh I whose reign spanned both Mughal rulers, serving dutifully and successfully, accomplishing great deeds for both rulers. The grants issued earlier in Vṛndāvana during Akbar's reign were preserved by both Jahangir and Shah Jahan, in fact there was even tangible improvements in the patronage allotted. A further development during their reigns was the transfer of administrative control of key temples like Govindadeva to the Amer family, illustrating the intimacy between the Kachvāhās and Govindadeva. However, during Aurangzeb's reign, there was a dramatic decline in the fortunes of the temples of Vṛndāvana, which witnessed Govindadeva like many other deities who were under threat, having to be secretly escorted outside Vṛndāvana. This change in fortune coincides with a breakdown in the Kachvāhā-Mughal alliance, caused by Aurangzeb's distrust of the Kachvāhās due to their alleged participation in the escape of Shivaji. The Kachvāhā dynasty had been intimately connected with the fortunes of Govindadeva providing a variety of services for him, beginning with the initial construction of his majestic temple in Vṛndāvana to providing regular patronage and administrative aid for the preservation of the temple, therefore even in times of crisis, the Kachvāhās displayed their devotion for Govindadeva. The deity eventually settled in Jaipur becoming the state deity of the new capital city. Once in Jaipur, the Kachvāhā family provided complete protection and comfort for Govindadeva. With the new residence of Govindadeva, the deity founded by the foremost Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teacher Rūpa Gosvāmī, so begins a new chapter of engagement between the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition and the Kachvāhā ruler Jaisingh II, which will be illustrated in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 2 – Jaisingh II and the Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavas

Demise of the Mughal regime and rise of Jaisingh II

The Kachvāhās kings had been in an alliance with the Mughal regime since 1562, however by the late eighteenth century the once formidable Mughal empire had collapsed, ensured by Aurangzeb's death in 1707. This permitted provincial successor powers to assume control. Kingdoms no longer felt as obliged to align with the Mughals and even if they did remain supporters they no longer did with the same zeal. Alliances founded and fortified during the rule of Akbar weakened during the reign of Aurangzeb, which accelerated upon his death. This development, coupled with the depletion of Mughal resources required to sustain the empire led to the rapid disintegration of the empire. During this transition period, although the Kachvāhās led by Jaisingh II¹ in the early eighteenth century remained superficially loyal to the Mughal court, Jaisingh II consciously distanced himself from the trademarks of a Mughal noble. In this period of political upheavals, Jaisingh II's achievements were remarkable, establishing him as perhaps the greatest ever Kachvāhā ruler. His accolades culminated in the building of a new capital city, Jaipur, that showcased the revived and rising status of the Kachvāhā dynasty in North India.

Jaisingh II and Jaipur

Jaisingh II's rise to the throne of Amer

Jaisingh II emerged as one of the most illustrious rulers of the Kachvāhā dynasty, surpassing the accolades of even Mānsingh and Jaisingh I. As well as being an accomplished statesman, he was also extremely learned, possessing numerous scholarly and religious interests. He was proficient in the science of astronomy and a devout supporter and patron of various arts. His passions were reflected in the influx of works from artists, scholars and astrologers in the city palace museum in Jaipur. Indeed, he is still revered in modern times, Jawaharlal Nehru once stated that 'by dint of his qualities he would have been a remarkable man anywhere and at any time.'²

Jaisingh II was conferred the throne of Amer at the tender age of 11 and ruled from 1699 to 1743. As a young Kachvāhā ruler he exhibited traits and skills befitting an exemplary leader. The Emperor Aurangzeb, grateful of Jaisingh's contributions to the ambitions of the empire which included participating in battles in Khelna, Panhala and other regions in the Deccan, bestowed

¹ Not to be confused with Mirza Raja Jaisingh I (ruling from 1621-1667)

² D.K. Taknet, *Jaipur the glorious Pink City of India*, (New Delhi, 2016), p.49

the prestigious title of 'Savai', meaning he who is one and a quarter, or in other words one who is more capable than one man. However, upon Aurangzeb's death in 1707, Jaisingh's fortunes took a turn for the worse for a brief interval. Having become embroiled in the struggle for succession for the Mughal throne, Jaisingh had aligned with Azam, the eventual Mughal ruler Bahadar Shah's rival, which temporarily cost him the Amer Capital. Jaisingh's plight was further aggravated as his rival and younger half-brother Vijaysingh on the other hand, had formed an alliance with Mughal ruler Bahadar Shah.³ Therefore, as retaliation for siding with Bahadar Shah's adversary, Amer was engulfed by Mughal troops in 1708 and renamed to Mominabad, 'the city of the orthodox Muslims' and his brother Vijaysingh was assigned to oversee the city. However, shortly after the Mughal emperor had to shift his attention towards the Deccan where his own brother was initiating an uprising. Seizing the opportunity in his absence, Jaisingh formed alliances with other Rajputs in Jodhpur and Udaipur, who had encountered comparable maltreatment from the Mughal leader, and together they recaptured Amer in late 1708. In 1713 Jaisingh also captured his adversary Vijaysingh, imprisoning him until his death. After this period of difficulty and uncertainty for Jaisingh, his fortunes changed dramatically and entered a phase of tremendous prosperity. Jaisingh was also able to consolidate his position at the Mughal court, yet simultaneously presenting himself as an independent Hindu king. He served the Mughal regime in various ways, whilst also distancing himself from the Mughal titles that were gifted to him, perhaps well aware of the inescapable looming political transformations transpiring. Foreseeing that he was at a turning point in the politics of North India with the waning of the Mughal empire, Jaisingh established his own clan's position as formidable independent rulers epitomized by the construction of a grand capital city catapulting the Kachvāhās as a significant polity in the North Indian political scene once again.⁴ The new capital city of Jaipur was situated approximately ten kilometers from the former capital Amer. It was within this shifting political context that in 1713 Jaisingh also retrieved Govindadeva out of exile to dwell in the splendid new temple in Kanaka Vṛndavāna, which was a beautiful garden assembled by the king that emulated Vṛndavāna. Govindadeva arrived at the heart of the patrimonial homeland of the dynasty, symbolizing the growing assertion of the Kachvāhā clan in response to the waning Mughal regime.

Construction of Jaipur

The new Kachvāhā capital of Jaipur symbolized far more than simply another kingdom operating within the jurisdiction and domain of the Mughal regime, Kachvāhā king Jaisingh II sensed an

³ Cynthia Packert, *The Art of Loving Kṛṣṇa*, (Indiana, 2010), p.136

⁴ Monika Horstmann, *Visions of kingship in the Twilight of Mughal Rule*, (Amsterdam, 2006), p.8

opportune moment to establish himself as a self-governing independent sovereign within North India. The city took approximately four years to be built, as well as adopting standard construction procedures, Jaisingh also executed Vedic rituals and ceremonies grounded upon age-old customs. In this way, he established his new capital city upon the principles of *dharma* and asserted himself as an autonomous monarch, distancing himself from the Mughal regime.

He also exhibited his autonomy in several other significant ways. For instance, after the death of Bahadur Shah in 1712, he relinquished the Mughal title, *Mirza Rāja*, along with the traditionally used seal of allegiance to the Mughal emperor and from 1727 adopted the seal demonstrating fidelity to Sītā-Rāma, whom had been the family deities of the Kachvāhās since Amer.⁵ Such maneuvers, enabled the Kachvāhās to become autonomous without explicitly defying the Mughal administration, Jaisingh assumed such tactics to fortify his status as a Hindu king no longer directly answerable to the Mughal emperor.

A further strategic component to inaugurate the new Kachvāhā capital of Jaipur was the installation of Govindadeva at the heart of the city. Govindadeva became the official state deity of the new capital, consequently, as Jaisingh rose to be a self-governing monarch, so too did the status of the deity of Govindadeva paralleling his prosperities. Although, the deity had been a recipient of lavish Kachvāhā patronage in Vṛndavāna, however in Jaipur the deity's status evolved to embody the foremost symbol of Jaisingh's Hindu kingship in his new headquarters. Other Rajputs had similarly established Kṛṣṇa deities in their kingdoms. For instance, the Mewar Rajput kingdom offered safe haven for Śrī Nathaji who had been transported to the region during Aurangzeb's desecration of Vṛndavāna, and subsequently a temple was erected in the Mewar domain. Therefore, although Jaisingh's installation of Govindadeva as part of his statecraft strategies was not novel, nevertheless he shared an especially intimate rapport with Govindadeva, so much so that his official residence overlooked the Govindadeva temple, which was situated in the city palace grounds.⁶ Furthermore, Jaisingh's official seal also bears the inscription *Śrī govinda-deva-carana savai jaya-simha-sarana*, the mighty Jaisingh takes shelter at the feet of the venerable Govindadeva,⁷ such Sanskrit inscriptions were significant mechanisms for royal assertion. Considering the intimate relationship between the king and the deity, it appeared to the public that his desires were synonymous to the wishes of the divine

⁵ Okita, *Hindu theology*, p.31

⁶ Monika Horstmann, "Govinddevjī of Vrndaban and Jaipur", in A. W. Entwistle and F. O. Mallison Ed., *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature: Research Papers*, (New Delhi, 1994), p.86

⁷ Bahura, *Literary Heritage of the Rulers of Amer and Jaipur*, (Jaipur, 1976), p.66

Govindadeva, fostering further religious legitimization. Hence, Govindadeva became a fundamental component of Jaisingh's exertions to establish himself as the sovereign of the new Kachvāhā capital, which epitomized an extraordinary powerbase in Kachvāhā history seen never before.

Another custom embraced in ascertaining Hindu sovereignty, which had been popular in Maharashtra, with kings like Shivaji entailed adopting the process of *Brahminisation*. In Jaipur, *brahmins* were appointed to execute specific rituals to further legitimize his status as king. In this way, identical procedures of royal assertion employed in Maharashtra were also adopted by the Rājput kings.⁸ Jaisingh following the traditions of contemporary Hindu kings invited and encouraged *brahmins* to endorse his leadership. According to the traditional Hindu social system known as *varṇāśrama*, the *brahmin* is situated at the top of the social body, just as the head is situated at the top of the body. Thus, Jaisingh legitimized his position as Hindu ruler with the performance of public rituals carried out by such qualified *brahmins*, further bolstering his position as the indisputable king in the public perception of his subjects. As testimony to his consecration by the *Brahmin* order, the king was divinely ordained by honorific titles such as *śrī* and *jī*, designations usually reserved for deities or religious figures.⁹ Such venerable titles were symptomatic of divinity, suggestive that he was a conduit between worldly realm and the divine world. Therefore, as well as being a sovereign of this realm, he was also considered a representative of the divine. Indeed, Kṛṣṇadeva in his composition known as *Karma-vivṛti*, which will be the subject of the following chapter, refers to Jaisingh as the venerable king of kings, whilst also employing the honorific title of *Śrī*.¹⁰

As a further mark of his prowess, Jaisingh also executed the *Vājapeya Yajña* in 1708. He used the ritual to highlight his imperial power to the public. The right to perform this ritual is highly contested and Jaisingh undoubtedly undertook this ritual to make a bold proclamation asserting his authority in this period of political upheaval. He also pioneered the enactment of a ritual that had not been conducted for many years, the *Aśvamedha Yajña*. Indeed, the ritual was executed not merely once but remarkably twice in his reign. The *Aśvamedha Yajña* is a highly ambitious and prestigious ritual, which is performed exclusively by great kings and contributed to enhancing the status of the king. This *Aśvamedha* ritual entailed the release of the king's horse trailed by an army of four hundred soldiers. The horse was left to wander at will, any lands which were trespassed by the horse would be considered territory belonging to the king and forbidding

⁸ Horstmann, *Visions of kingship*, p.7

⁹ Hortsman, *Jaipur 1778 The Making of a King*, p.17

¹⁰ Śrīmad-rājādhi-rājānā (Horstmann, *Der Zusammenhalt der Welt*, p.218)

entry to the horse would be considered a declaration of war. Such acts dispatched a clear message to Jaisingh's subjects and his enemies, further reinforcing his authority and supremacy within Jaipur.¹¹ Jaisingh's appetite for the execution of rituals is renowned, he was even described as '*pancādhikaśatāśvamedhayāji*' or one who has performed 105 *Aśvamedha* rituals. Although this is likely to have been an exaggeration, nevertheless the epithet reflects his zeal to perform such Vedic rituals. There are also numerous ritual works commissioned by him, for instance the '*Jayasimha-Kalpadruma*' which details the daily *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* executed by Jaisingh.¹²

The customs adopted by Jaisingh to articulate his position as a king were evidently Hindu ones. Although, the term Hindu is rarely used in the discourses of this era,¹³ yet however, Jaisingh

¹¹ Yamini Narayanan, *Religion, Heritage and the Sustainable City*, (New York, 2014), p.106

¹² Bahura, *Literary Heritage of the Rulers of Amber and Jaipur*, p.60

¹³ The usage of religious affiliation to define rulers whether Hindu or Muslim is problematic in the early modern period, especially as such terms were not used in the same way in the 16th century compared to how they are utilized in the 20th or 21st century. Exploring this issue further I refer to Joseph T.O'Connell's work where he examines the usage of the term 'Hindu' in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava texts, focusing primarily on the hagiographical texts of the tradition in Bengali and Sanskrit, written between the early sixteenth and late eighteenth century. From his survey, we observe that the term Hindu doesn't appear in the Sanskrit texts and seldom in the Bengali texts. When the term does appear, it is not in purely Hindu gatherings or contexts, but rather in circumstances of tension between Hindus and another group – referred to as either Yavana (foreigner), Mleccha (barbarian) or Musalman. Firstly, this indicates that categories such as 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' were not widely used, and secondly, suggests that religion wasn't the primary characteristic used to identify the 'Muslim' community. The biographies also illustrate that it is often non-Hindus who use the expression 'Hindu' to refer to the other group and not used within purely Hindu settings. There is also no explicit discussion in the texts of what Hindu or Hindu dharma entails. (Joseph O'Connell, "The Word 'Hindu' in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Texts", *The Journal of American Oriental Society*, 93.3 (1973), p.340–344) This analysis by Joseph T.O'Connell supports the theory that the importance of labels like 'Hindu' stem from the Orientalist view of communities within the colonial period, which assumed that religion was the most critical feature of an Indian society. Of course, this position fueled claims that clashes between political rulers in the Mughal period were driven by religious beliefs. Understanding historical accounts through this lens exacerbated the Hindu-Muslim divide, a sinister strategy adopted by colonial rulers to extend their rule. Tony Stewart also explains in regard to the early Bengali Islamic texts, identity is denoted by sect affiliations, precise classifications such as Sufis or Sunnis or Shi-ahs or Vaiṣṇavas, Śaivas or Śāktas, in contrast to strict exclusive Hindu and Muslim categories. He also postulates later formulated accounts of

projected himself as a Hindu ruler in the sense that he aspired to mold his kingship on the principles of *dharma*. Therefore, he drew on exemplars of kingship founded on *dharmic* principles, and should not be mistaken to have acted without precedent or in an ideological void. In this respect, he was also regularly likened to historical rulers of yore, such as king Yudhiṣṭhira who is described in the epics and the tenth *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, Kalki, who descends in this era to dissipate the evils of this world. Even his own funeral procession path, laid out three years before his death, mirrored that of Yudhiṣṭhira's ascent to heaven. In this and similar ways Jaisingh established himself as a divinely ordained Hindu king, following in the footsteps of the ancient celebrated kings of the tradition.

These mechanisms contributed to Jaisingh's efforts to establish himself as the foremost sovereign in his new capital city carefully formulating his brand of kingship and statecraft on the pillars of *dharma*. Thus, Jaisingh's process of state building entailed ambitious schemes of religious legitimation, each act provided an imperative contribution in attaining the unquestioned support of his subjects in Jaipur, and establishing himself as a political force in North India. From the process of *brahminisation*, to abandoning the Mughal seal of allegiance, to the performance of highly contested rituals, through to the masterstroke of installing Govindadeva, one of the most venerated deities in Northern India in the center of his capital, all proved to be crucial mechanisms employed to establish himself as a Hindu Rajput ruler of Jaipur worthy of formidable Hindu kings of yore.

Period of Religious Reform, Conflict and Competition

With the influx of Vaiṣṇava groups from Vṛndavāna into the new capital city of Jaipur, Jaisingh tackled the task of accommodating all the newly arrived groups and maintaining the older religious groups from Amer, the old capital. Inevitably, each of these groups contested for the

history are conceived of in an intensely political environment, resulting in readings of communities in rigorously Hindu and Muslim categories. State-wide orchestrated mechanisms in the mid-nineteenth century further enforced such divisions, for instance, the British census in 1872. Therefore, he claims historical readings must take into consideration motivations behind processes born in the colonial period that may have politicized religious orientations. (Tony K. Stewart, "In Search of Equivalence", *History of Religions*, (2001), 40.3, p.263-265)

favor and patronage of Jaisingh. Consequently, in the process of negotiating the co-existence of this multitude of traditions, consensus based universal religious standards were fashioned derived from the input of various theologians and scholars. In the process of these developments, specific sets of criteria were formulated to distinguish orthodox and non-orthodox conduct.

A vital component of re-establishing traditional models of Hindu kingship and statecraft within Jaisingh's domain rested upon integrating and legitimizing the practice of *smarta* rituals, which formed the foundation of his ambitions to construct a state underpinned by *dharmic* principles. The Vaiṣṇava communities that arrived were subsequently engaged in projects to endorse the practice of *smarta* rituals. However, since the fourteenth century in Rajasthan *smarta* rituals had been associated primarily with non-tantric Shaivism and the monism of Shankara, and thus the term *smarta* had begun to denote the antithesis of Vaiṣṇava practice, accentuating the divide between Vaiṣṇavas and *Smartas* in that region.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Vaiṣṇava groups made valiant attempts to incorporate Vaiṣṇava elements into the *smarta* rituals, and endorsed a type of Vaiṣṇava *smarta* practice, that held in balance orthodox *dharma* and *bhakti* practices deriving its authority from Vaiṣṇava *Purāṇas*. An example of Vaiṣṇava *smarta* practice was illustrated by Hare Kṛṣṇa Bhaṭṭa, probably of the Vallabha sect and a former resident of Gokul in Vṛndavāna. Having spent substantial time in Banaras, he acted as chief *adhvaryu* for the *Vājapeya* and *Aśvamedha* rituals in Jaipur. He also produced a text known as *Vaidika-Vaiṣṇava-sadācāra* outlining Vaiṣṇava conduct which endorsed Vedic rituals with tantric practices in accordance with the teachings of the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa*. A similar manual was generated by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, known as the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*.¹⁵ These works delineated an orthodox Vaiṣṇavism grounded on a brand of Vaiṣṇavism which did not undermine Vedic rituals. Thus, through such literary contributions, the notions of expected orthodox Vaiṣṇava conduct were further defined and broadcast. This was just one of several measures inspired by the king to demarcate and promote orthodox practices within his realm.

The exertions by sects to integrate *smarta* culture within their idiosyncratic practices spawned a further measure for orthodox behaviour. Considering that Shankara has been associated with *smarta* ritual practice, sects were also expected to emulate the ideal instituted by Shankara,¹⁶ consequently it became a requirement to provide commentaries on three central canonical texts from the Vedic corpus, the *Brahma-sūtras*, the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, commonly known as the *prasthāna-traya*, the three key canonical texts of Vedānta. Indeed, not

¹⁴ Horstmann, *Visions of kingship*, p.18

¹⁵ Horstmann, *Visions of kingship*, p.20

¹⁶ Horstmann, *Visions of kingship*, p.21

only Shankara, but the founders of all the major schools of Vedānta such as Rāmānuja and Mādhva had outlined their distinctive theological positions through commentaries on these works. Therefore, commentaries on these significant writings were expected from sects who aspired to conform to the religious reforms prevalent, spurred on by the political pressures ubiquitous in this era.

Another imperative requirement for authenticity and orthodoxy for sects in this era, entailed the necessity to present a legitimate link to one of the four traditionally accepted Vaiṣṇava factions. The four orders revolved around the teachings of Viṣṇusvāmī, Madhva, Nimbārka and Rāmānuja. Lineage affiliations had developed into an accepted standard in North India to diagnose orthodox legitimacy and thus became an imperative measure of authenticity at the Jaipur courts. It was also essential that the content of a sect's textual contributions reflected the claimed lineage affiliations. Therefore, sects within Jaipur were rigorously scrutinized and examined by Jaisingh's courts, determining whether such affiliations proposed were genuine or fabricated in order to receive imperial endorsement.

The introduction of criteria for authenticity in this period generated a highly competitive atmosphere, representatives of the various Vaiṣṇava groups strived to authenticate the traditions they embodied at the courts of Jaipur in order to achieve the endorsement of the imperial administration. Vaiṣṇava sects such as the Rāmānandīs, the Nimbārkas, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and the followers of Vallabha all contended in this politico-religious environment. Of these groups, the Rāmānandīs and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas especially competed having the most at stake, being the chief patrons of the Kachvāhās.

Rāmānandī Reforms

The Rāmānandī tradition, founded by the fourteenth-century North Indian Vaiṣṇava reformer Rāmānanda, who had built the largest monastic community of that period, held a long-standing association with the Kachvāhā dynasty. In the reign of Prithvirāja, who ruled from 1503 to 1527 in Amer, Kṛṣṇadāsa Payohari, a grand disciple of Rāmānanda came and settled in Galta, a valley close to Jaipur. Payohari, a devotee of Sītā and Rāma, became the teacher of Prithvirāja. The Rāmānandīs developed a close affinity to the Amer royal family leading to Sītā-Rāma becoming the chief deities of the Amer Kingdom. Sītā-Rāma had been the family deities of the Kachvāhās and subsequently further reinforced their alleged descent from Kuśa, one of the sons of Rāma.¹⁷ The Kachvāhā's commitment to Sītā-Rāma was also reflected in the official seal of the Kachvāhā kings. In spite of the privileged status that the Rāmānandīs enjoyed with the Kachvāhās, as the

¹⁷ Okita, *Hindu theology*, p.30

tradition shifted from Amer to Jaipur, they too were the subject of scrutiny and were pressured to conform to the new approved orthodox standards established for the innumerable traditions, new and old, in this new religious landscape. As a consequence of the new pressure they encountered in Jaipur, there were several reforms that the tradition had to adopt, resulting in a marked change in the profile of the Rāmānandīs. Like other traditions in Jaipur they were required to align themselves with one of the four authorized *sampradāyas*. To fulfil this requirement, they professed a connection to Rāmānuja, and therefore the Rāmānanda community in Galta identified themselves as the Rāmānuja-Rāmānandīs, which distinguished them from other Rāmānandīs, who proclaimed their descent from Rāmānanda solely.¹⁸ Consequently, Rāmānanda’s status as a follower of Rāmānuja became a contentious issue, and in the early twentieth century a faction succeeded in rewriting the *sampradāya’s* hagiography omitting Rāmānuja from the tradition’s genealogy.¹⁹

The Rāmānandīs were also compelled to address the rising malpractices amongst ascetics in their community. Jaisingh was keen on curbing the inappropriate conduct exhibited by ascetics and instead encouraged an orthodox householder style of practice. Consequently, the Rāmānuja-Rāmānandīs adopted orthodox practices and standards according to the Śrī Vaiṣṇava sect of Rāmānuja. Indeed, the head of monastery in Galta, who from the very commencement of the lineage traditionally had been a celibate ascetic was now compelled to become a householder practitioner. Other sects headed by ascetics also came under duress and were compelled to undergo similar reformations. Galta in particular was targeted by Jaisingh for reform, as it was influential and the ascetics appeared quite lax in expected practices.²⁰ Since this reformation, the leaders of the Galta community have remained householders which has accentuated the divide between them and other ascetic orientated Rāmānandīs.²¹ Jaisingh II also checked the Rāmānandīs’ practice of *madhuropāsanā* or the worship of the Lord’s marital activities. In this practice, the Rāmānandīs meditated upon the loving relations between Rāma and Sītā, the king became alarmed over the ramifications for Vaiṣṇava monks who were expected to adhere to the discipline of celibacy.²² As will be discussed later, he was similarly concerned over the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, especially their revered extra marital affairs. His

¹⁸ Hortsmann, *Jaipur 1778 The Making of a King*, p.49

¹⁹ William R. Pinch, “Reinventing Ramanand: Caste and History in Gangetic India”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 30.3 (1996), p.552

²⁰ Horstmann, *Visions of kingship*, p.23

²¹ Pinch, *Reinventing Ramanand*, p.557

²² G. P. Pilania, *Enlightened Government in Modern India*, (Jaipur, 2002) p.118

apprehension in this respect was also revealed in his role as governor of Mathurā. For those ascetics in Mathurā who were lax in the practice of celibacy, Jaisingh appealed to them to marry and live as householders, residing in a village that he established called *Vairāgyapura*, ‘the city of asceticism’, near Mathurā in 1727.²³ His reformation attempts were extensive, even laboring to discipline the military potentials of Vaiṣṇava ascetics who inhabited his domain, especially prohibiting those that were not employed by the Kachvāhā administration.²⁴

Therefore, despite preserving an intimate rapport with the Kachvāhās dating back to Prithvirāja, the Rāmānandīs were forced to respond to the labors of Jaisingh to institute orthodox behavioral practices by yielding to the reforms both theological and social in nature. These politically-charged reformations were deemed to be mandatory not just for the Rāmānandīs but all religious groups that aspired to be recipients of not only patronage from the political administration but also considered crucial for their very survival in Jaipur and Mathurā.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect enters religious landscape of Jaipur

This fascinating period in Jaipur witnessed the influx of Vaiṣṇava sects and deities arriving and settling in Jaipur. This phenomenon was invoked by the precarious circumstances encountered in their homeland of Vṛndavāna. Several deities such as Govindadeva had to be relocated to Jaipur and sought shelter in this new religious landscape. Inevitably this disrupted the religious hierarchy in the Kachvāhā state as newly arriving religious sects had to be accommodated which at times demanded the displacement of others sect. In other words, in Jaipur, Jaisingh embraced the arduous task of accommodating the new Vaiṣṇava groups entering the current religious framework whilst also endeavouring to preserve the ritual and rank topography founded earlier in Amer.

The renowned Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava deity of Govindadeva was one of the principle deities of Vṛndavāna, originally founded by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teacher Rūpa Gosvāmī. Like the Rāmānanda deities of Sītā-Rāma in Amer, the Govindadeva deity of Vṛndavāna was a recipient of patronage from the Kachvāhās. Govindadeva received patronage from as early as Kachvāhā ruler Bhārmal, whose grandson Mānsingh constructed a grand temple for Govindadeva in the pastures of Vṛndavāna. In the final phase of the Mughal empire’s command of North India, Aurangzeb and his forces posed a threat to the safety of the deity, eventually resulting in the partial demolition of the Govindadeva temple. In this difficult time Govindadeva was secretly escorted to Rādhākuṇḍa, and then eventually to Kaman, a city in the Mathurā district, where a suitable compound

²³ Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, p.204

²⁴ Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, p.203

could be assembled for Govindadeva. For many years Govindadeva along with two other central Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava deities, Gopīnatha and Madana-Mohana, remained in Kaman. It was hoped that Govindadeva's exile was temporary and that once the turmoil subsided, the deities would be returned to their natural home of Vṛndavāna. However, instead of returning to Vṛndavāna, Govindadeva was transferred to Rajasthan and the new capital of the Kachvāhās became the new sanctuary for the deities.

Govindadeva's new home differed significantly from the land of Vṛndavāna, where he had lived unopposed, being one of the foremost worshipable deities in the forest. In Vṛndavāna, the worship and status of Govindadeva was beyond question and criticism, *bhakti* was freely practiced based on the core tenets of the *bhakti* path. Even though the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect via temples such as Govindadeva shared an intimate rapport with the Kachvāhā dynasty, nevertheless their doctrines and practice had not been arbitrated rigorously, however, in this highly competitive religious atmosphere in Jaipur they were compelled to respond to the concerns and demands raised as Jaisingh toiled to govern the conglomerate of religious sects in his domain. In Jaipur, Govindadeva encountered challenges from sects such as the Rāmānandīs who had initially enjoyed a prominent status with the Kachvāhā kings, primarily through their deity of Sītā-Rāma which had been honored as the preeminent deities in the Kachvāhā homeland of Amer. Indeed, the Rāmānanda sect had traditionally played such a pivotal role that each of the kings undertook a ceremony with the Rāma mantra by a Rāmānandī *mahant* upon their inauguration. Prior to Govindadeva's arrival, the deity had only been a distant rival, however with his arrival in Jaipur and his popularity with the royal family, this posed a threat to the privileged position that the Rāmānandī tradition had held for so long with the Kachvāhās in their homeland.²⁵

Despite the presence of numerous other sects and the Kachvāhās extensive history of devotion to the Rāmānandī sect, nevertheless Jaisingh arranged to place the Govindadeva temple at the heart of his new capital and no other temple. This shift in loyalties was reflected in the realm in various ways. For instance, in the capital, the principal deities of Jaipur were organized in a triangular formation. Govindadeva was deployed in the city palace grounds at the apex of the formation, at the western base of the triangle stood a Sītā-Rāma temple and on the eastern end there was a Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple erected.²⁶ The arrangement of the deities highlighted the superior status of Govindadeva among the foremost deities of the Kachvāhās. Furthermore, the

²⁵ Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, p.191

²⁶ Narayanan, *Religion, Heritage and the Sustainable City*, p.107

coronation ceremony also highlighted how Govindadeva superseded Sītā-Rāma as described by Monika Horstmann:

On the evening of the coronation he (i.e. the custodian of Govindadeva) becomes the most prominent Vaiṣṇava of the kingdom: the new maharaja first renders respects to Govindadeva, then to the tutelary goddesses of the territory and clan and only then presents himself at the temple of Sītārāma.²⁷

Formerly Govindadeva had been installed in Kanak Vṛndavāna, a model replica of the original Vṛndavāna, on a route between Amer and Jaipur. Thus, Vṛndavāna had been imported to the Kachvāhā domain to host Govindadeva and it was here that the deity was worshipped from 1714. In 1716 the Govindadeva deity was installed in its final destination, the Jainivas garden, situated in the heart of Jaipur. Once inaugurated in Jaipur, Govindadeva became the principal political-religious emblem and accordingly was foregrounded in the palace complex itself. Indeed, the deity had always remained a symbol of valor for the Kachvāhās, ever since Mānsingh at the peak of his power had constructed a magnificent temple for the deity. As testament to the prolonged patronage and dedication to Govindadeva, all titleholders attached to the court were also now obliged to contribute endowments towards the preservation of the deity and his caretakers.²⁸

The status of Govindadeva was also enhanced by the king's genuine devotion for the deity. His attraction to Govindadeva inspired him to arrange the construction of the temple in such a way that he could retain an unobstructed vision of Govindadeva from his palace. His commitment to Govindadeva also motivated him to prostrate himself before the deity on a daily basis, symbolic of his devotion to Govindadeva.²⁹ At the end of his rule, after allotting the throne to his son Ishvarisingh, Jaisingh retired and exhausted the remaining years of his life exclusively in the worship of Govindadeva. The court poet Kṛṣṇa Bhaṭṭa Kalanidhi provides the following account of his movements upon retirement:

Continuously he contemplated full of love Kṛṣṇa's face, He had turned a bee that rejoices profoundly In drinking the nectar of the sweetness of bliss. (10.2)
In contact with pious people the like of him, he listened to the excellences of Govinda: he was a cakora bird whose gaze was totally abandoned to Him, He uttered His name, Inhaled the fragrance of His tulsi-foot and remained

²⁷ Horstmann, *In Favour of Govindadevji*, p.7

²⁸ Horstmann, *In Favour of Govindadevji*, p.25

²⁹ Packert, *The Art of Loving Krishna*, p.141

absorbed In unity with Him. (10.3) He performed the works taught by the Veda and was In possession of a knowledge for which the valid proofs were provided by the Upaniṣads, He worshipped Kṛṣṇa according to the ninefold mode of bhakti and due to Its perfection he attained love (preman). (10.4) When his son, named Isvari Singh, was able to carry the burden of rule he put It on him, Thirsting for all-encompassing enjoyment, he with-drew gradually and bore himself the load of the non-dual love of Kṛṣṇa. (10.5). He had performed his duties which were conducive to righteous acts and In awareness of the true being of the Supreme Self. At the foot-lotus of Govinda he abandoned himself alone and totally to the love of Him. (10.6)... In the early morning of the 14th bright day of Asvin of VS 1800 Govinda was led into the lotus of his heart: the ruler Who had become like God expired and was absorbed In God. (10.10).³⁰

As a consequence of Jaisingh's commitment to Govindadeva, Jaisingh also developed a special interest in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect who had been the personal caretakers of the Govindadeva deity from the commencement of the deity's worship initiated by the discoverer of Govindadeva, the revered Rūpa Gosvāmī. Jaisingh amassed the major works associated with the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition and deposited them in the city palace library. He collected biographies pertaining to the founder of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, Caitanya, and the works of the foremost teachers of the tradition such as Rūpa, Sanātana and Jīva Gosvāmī. Additionally, he gathered and possessed the works of contemporary Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachers such as Viśvanātha, Baladeva and Kṛṣṇadeva.

Despite his partiality for the school, it was not only the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect that attracted Jaisingh's attention. He was also sympathetic to other Vaiṣṇava schools and thus he possessed literatures associated with other Vaiṣṇava sects such as the Nimbārka, Rāmānandī and Vallabha traditions. He also constructed a temple dedicated to Sītā-Rāma in Mathurā and a temple in honor of Varādhārāja. He participated in Vaiṣṇava festivals such as Holi and Rāmanavamī and also visited pilgrimage sites in Mathurā, Benaras, Prayag and so on.³¹ Such examples illustrate the broad religious interests of the king. He also strived to inspire unity amongst the conglomerate of sects within his domain, consequently he commissioned several philosophical pieces in this regard. For instance, learned scholars fashioned works such as

³⁰ Horstmann, "Govinddevjī of Vrindaban and Jaipur", p.87

³¹ V.S.Bhaktnagar, *Life and Times of Sawai Jaisingh*, (Delhi,1974), p.340

Siddhantaikya-prakasika which illuminates on the unity of all philosophies by simplifying modes of worship to establish harmony. He is also ascribed to have personally written a commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra* texts known by several names to reconcile various perspectives held by prominent sects.³² He was widely respected for his labors to promote unification and thus, Venkatācārya of the Rāmānuja school remarking on his efforts, states:

As in the past, Nṛsimha (the fourth of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu) suppressed the antimony between a man and a lion (by joining the head of a lion with the neck of a man), so does the wise and learned king Jaisingh make the representatives of different sects speak firmly with one voice by rectifying their outward differences.³³

Nevertheless, despite his noble endeavors to achieve unification, Jaisingh's reign was characterized by a religiously competitive atmosphere, different factions and sects labored to persuade royalty of their legitimate positions. Attaining the favor of the imperial regime was critical for the survival and the prospective fortunes of the respective sects. Furthermore, the partiality demonstrated for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect by Jaisingh did not go unnoticed, and as their prominence grew in Jaipur, it invoked insecurities amongst other Vaiṣṇava groups such as the Rāmānandīs who had earlier enjoyed the foremost political support. Consequently, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava faction encountered criticisms and were compelled to justify their prominent position. Often the challenges and accusations raised were the subject of debates in the royal courts culminating in mandates to substantiate credentials in orthodox terms according to approved upon standards that had shaped the religious landscape of Jaipur. Consequently, this period marked an extraordinary phase in the political-religious relations within North India, whereby Jaisingh utilized state patronage to discipline the practices of this conglomerate of religious factions.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava leaders and relations with Jaisingh II

Before we examine the specific trials that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school encountered in this period of reformation, I will introduce the principal advocates and defenders of the tradition that articulated responses to the challenges confronted in this era. The Govindadeva deity, founded by the revered Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava saint Rūpa Gosvāmī, became one of the principal deities of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community. Since the reign of Kachvāhā ruler Bharmal, Govindadeva had also

³² Pīlania, *Enlightened Government in Modern India*, p.30

³³ Bahura, *Literary Heritage of the Rulers of Amer and Jaipur*, p.61

received the special care of the Kachvāhā family evolving to become a symbol of Kachvāhā prestige. The influence of Govindadeva was overwhelming and led to flourishing relations between the Kachvāhās and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. This alliance intensified upon Jaisingh's reign, illustrating the king's special affinity for Govindadeva resulting in a period of favor for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school. Jaisingh's intimate relations with the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect further developed in his role as governor of Mathurā and Agra, a position from which frequent interactions with the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community were inevitable. He also built a retreat house on the banks of Yamuna in Vṛndavāna known as *Jaisingh Ghera*,³⁴ where he partook in theological discussions with the various Vaiṣṇava sects of Vṛndavāna. Although, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect nor Jaisingh II ever declared that he was formally initiated into the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*, an exceptional bond between them existed nevertheless. Therefore, to appease and assist the king in his governance of the conglomerate of sects within Jaipur, and to reciprocate with the sustained patronage received from the royal family, three key figures contributed in distinctive ways to legitimize the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect and support the efforts of Jaisingh in this era, namely Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya and Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa.

Viśvanātha

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's precise date of birth is ambiguous, however there is evidence to indicate that it was some time in the first half of the seventeenth century.³⁵ According to traditional sources, he was born in Deva-grama in the Nadia district of West Bengal. Later he moved and settled in Saiyabad-grama where he studied under Rādhā-Rāmana Cakravartī. Although married, Viśvanātha was indifferent to worldly affairs and soon left his family to embark on a path of ascetism. He arrived in Vraja and typically resided at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, however it is also believed that he resided within Rādhā-Gokulānanda's temple complex in Vṛndavāna. He is also portrayed as the leader of a group of *bhaktas* residing in '*Śrī Gokulānandaji kunjā*' in 1712 according to manuscript evidence.³⁶ His movements can be traced from the closing signature statements found in his works.³⁷ A traditional account indicates that Viśvanātha had accepted a vow never to leave Vṛndavāna, even declining an apparent request by Jaisingh to travel to Jaipur to represent

³⁴ Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, p.201

³⁵ Adrian P.Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, (Australia, 2000), p.16

³⁶ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.26

³⁷ For more details on Viśvanātha Cakravartī consult Adrian Burton's doctoral thesis 'Temples, texts and taxes' who has provided an extensive insight into Viśvanātha's life based on rigorous research.

and defend the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect.³⁸ However, Viśvanātha was not indifferent to the religious concerns emanating from the debates and discussions within the Jaipur courts and subsequently it emerges that Viśvanātha responded to contentious issues concerning the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect in an indirect fashion. In contrast, his junior associates, Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya and Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa contributed directly, commissioning works and providing counsel to the king of Jaipur to facilitate his endeavors of religious reformation in the evolving religious landscape of Jaipur.

Although, Viśvanātha Cakravartī didn't heed to Jaisingh's request to travel to Jaipur, nevertheless, there were notable interactions between Jaisingh and Viśvanātha. For instance, there is a letter from the *mahant* of the Gokulānanda temple to Jaisingh, requesting for protection from the robbers on the roads close by. The *mahant* on that occasion is presumed to have been Viśvanātha. The Mughals also requested Jaisingh to suppress the *Jāts* in Vṛndavāna and during this expedition in 1716 he visited Viśvanātha's Gokulānanda temple, following which a substantial grant equivalent to an entire town's income was assigned to the temple.³⁹ Thus, there appears evidence to suggest that Jaisingh supported Viśvanātha's efforts in numerous ways, from supplying grants to providing safety.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī as one of the foremost leaders of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community in the seventeenth century, epitomized the community's dedication and devotion to Caitanya. This was often announced at the commencement of his works.⁴⁰ According to later representatives of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, Viśvanātha Cakravartī holds a distinguished position, for instance, the nineteenth century teacher Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī said, 'Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura was the protector, guardian, and ācārya during the middle period of the historical development of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Vaiṣṇavism.'⁴¹ Even during his life, Viśvanātha had an exalted reputation, he was well respected even outside the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, for instance, a poet from the Rādhā-Vallabha *sampradāya*, Hita Rasika Dāsa states 'Cakravartī is famous as a

³⁸ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.28

³⁹ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.11

⁴⁰ For instance, in the *Sarārtha-varṣini*, his *Bhagavad-Gītā* commentary he offers his respects to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya as follows, 'May the reservoir of nectar, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who makes the lotus-like devotees blossom with pleasure, and who destroys the darkness by his own beauty, be present in my mind and provide attachment for himself' (gaurāmsūkaḥ sat-kumuda-pramodī svābhikhyayā gos-tamaso nihantā | śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-sudha-nidhir me mano 'dhitiṣṭhan svaratim karotu)

⁴¹ Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, "Śrīpada Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thakur", *Gauḍīya*, 18.18 (1922)

unique and good natured *sādhu*. He constantly contemplates in his mind the devotional practice of Śrī Rūpa....'.⁴² He was also well-respected in the courts of Jaipur, as evidenced in a copy of the *Sārārtha-varṣinī*, in which the scribe describes Viśvanātha as a gentleman and scholar. Indeed, many of Viśvanātha's works are stored and archived in the royal library in the Jaipur palace.⁴³

Viśvanātha's textual contributions came close to the end of a period where the majority of works produced by the *bhakti* movement were primarily Sanskrit orientated. He along with Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭāchārya and Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa represent the last of such Sanskrit focused authors stemming from Caitanya. Indeed, in this period, it has been suggested that there was a proliferation of Sanskrit based writings across a number of disciplines, lasting up till the consolidation of colonial power. After which, there was a decline in the production of Sanskrit texts in India. However, whether this phenomenon pervaded all schools of thought across India is the subject of debates⁴⁴, nevertheless there appears to be evidence that in respect to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school this trend endured.

Furthermore, with Viśvanātha emerging later in the lineage stemming from Caitanya, he was privileged to have had the distance of almost two hundred years to critique the tradition and assess issues and concerns that required to be addressed. As a result, Viśvanātha composed numerous texts, treatises and commentaries explaining and expanding on previous commentaries. By commentating upon works from authors such as Rūpa Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha was able to highlight their ideas and teachings, once again bringing them to the forefront of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava thought. Therefore, the new was intimately connected to the old, embodying the notion of an 'Innovative traditionalist' in the language of Sheldon Pollock, another universal phenomenon trending across Sanskrit disciplines in India⁴⁵.

Viśvanātha assembled several texts on the science of *bhakti* to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa such as the *Mādhurya-Kādambinī* and *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*. He also compiled further contributions on the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, namely the *Sārārtha-daṛṣinī* and *Sārārtha-varṣinī* commentaries, and also the works of teachers such as Rūpa Gosvāmī and Kavi Karṇapūra. In fact, so impressive was his works that the later followers of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community believed that Viśvanātha Cakravartī was a manifestation of Rūpa Gosvāmī as he came nearest to matching Rūpa Gosvāmī's enlightening perspectives on matters of the ultimate truth. This homage is also

⁴² Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.41

⁴³ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.41

⁴⁴ Sheldon Pollock, "Working Papers On Sanskrit Knowledge-Systems on the Eve of Colonialism", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 33.1 (2002), p.431

⁴⁵ Pollock, "Sanskrit Knowledge-Systems on the Eve of Colonialism", p.434

attributed to the writings of Viśvanātha Cakravartī as he displays a special focus on the works of Rūpa Gosvāmī, indeed, most of his works were reflections on Rūpa Gosvāmī's compositions. For instance, he wrote *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindhu* a brief summary of the essential themes presented in Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and a further commentary on the text. He also composed a work known as the *Bhāgavatāmṛta-kaṇā*, which is a summary of Rūpa Gosvāmī's *laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta*, a description of the different forms of Kṛṣṇa and his exchanges with various groups of *bhaktas*. He also compiled a text known as *Ujjvala-nīla-maṇi-kiraṇa*, which is a synopsis of Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Ujjvala-nīla-maṇi*, a text illustrating the esoteric and intimate activities of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*. The *Mādhurya-Kādambinī* or the 'cloud bank of nectar' was a systematic presentation of the various stages traversed upon the path of *bhakti*, from the commencement to perfection, from *bhakti's* sprouting to its culmination concluding in *prema* or love. In this work, he commences by providing valuable instructions to eradicate impediments on the *bhakti* path for the novice, whereas the later passages describe the results that arise. The *Mādhurya-Kādambinī* is based on Rūpa Gosvāmī's writings, specifically *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* passages 1.4.15-16. Another significant compilation was the *Rāga-vartma-candrikā* or 'the moonbeam on the path of passionate *bhakti*', which is a short theological treatise on *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhakti* or the practice of following those who have passion for *bhakti*. According to Joseph O'Connell, the purpose of the text is to complete the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindhu*, a drop from the ocean of the nectarine mellow of devotion, written earlier by Viśvanātha summarizing Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*.⁴⁶ The text's purpose was to remove ambiguities and resolve points of dispute which had not been foreseen or considered as problematic in the period of Rūpa Gosvāmī, but had arisen since. Thus, from this brief synopsis of Viśvanātha's works, it is evident that his primary objective is to expand on the commentaries of his predecessors such as Rūpa Gosvāmī, to enlighten readers on the precise nature of the *bhakti* process and to offer realizations and insights in relation to the activities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. I discussed earlier that he was the head of the Gokulānanda temple, and consequently a leader in Vṛndavāna, one would assume of ascetics mostly. Subsequently, it could be inferred that his writings were primarily catered for them, possibly presenting a fairly private theology only reachable by a minority of public members. Nevertheless, amongst his writings, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* commentary appears as somewhat of an anomaly, an attempt to present *bhakti* in broader and more accommodating fashion and thus appealing to those more engrossed in the world.

⁴⁶ Joseph T O'Connell, "Rāgavartmacandrikā of Visvanatha Cakaravartīn", in A.L. Basham et al Ed., *In A Corpus of Indian Studies*, (Calcutta, 1980) p.185-209

Subsequently, perhaps his commentary on this work was a response to the religious demands invoked from Jaipur. I will explore this theory in further detail in the final chapter.

Kṛṣṇadeva

In contrast to Viśvanātha's engagement with the imperial regime, which was reduced to occasional yet meaningful exchanges in Vṛndavāna coupled with his indirect contributions to reforms issued from Jaipur, Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma's association with Jaisingh was far more intimate and extensive. Indeed, Kṛṣṇadeva was eventually employed by Jaisingh and became a critical director for the ambitious religious legitimization projects in Jaipur.

According to traditional accounts, Kṛṣṇadeva's lineage stemmed from Gadādhara Paṇḍit, an intimate and prominent associate of Caitanya. His father's name was Rāmakaṇṭha Cakravartī and his grandfather was named Raghubhadra.⁴⁷ Kṛṣṇadeva eventually migrated to Vṛndavāna and became a student at the Rādhā-Gokulānanda temple, where Viśvanātha presided as the leading teacher. Indeed, Kṛṣṇadeva refers to Viśvanātha Cakravartī as his teacher in select writings and describes him in the grandest of terms. According to traditional sources there is a dramatic account of Kṛṣṇadeva becoming a student of Viśvanātha:

A champion scholar from the East named Sārvabhauma Pandit arrived (in Braja) one day. He had heard of the name of Viśvanātha Cakravartī. Having been victorious in all directions, he travelled with a retinue of horses, elephants and riches. Many male and female slaves attended him. (He proclaimed) 'I will become the servant of whosoever can defeat me. But as of yet I have never met anyone from whom to take initiation...' Finally, he arrived in Rādhā-kuṇḍa and came upon Viśvanātha Cakravartī bathing at the kuṇḍa. He asked Viśvanātha 'Do you know where Viśvanātha is?' Viśvanātha replied 'Who knows where he is! Just ask me whatever you wanted to ask him.' 'But I want to debate with him' 'That's all right. Just debate with me. Don't stall.' And he sat down right there on the bathing ghat and said, 'You just answer what I say.' They debated at great length and the very person whom the Pandit had come to defeat defeated him in debate. Thus, Sārvabhauma Pandit

⁴⁷ Hortsman Monika, "A Theological Statement by Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭāchārya", in Ed. Naval Krishna and Manu Krishna, *Ananda-Vana of Indian Art*, (Banaras, 2004), p.367-74

became Viśvanātha's disciple and distributed all his wealth. For some time, the Pandit remained there and applied his mind to serving his guru....⁴⁸

Although this account of Kṛṣṇadeva seems to have been embellished as is often the case with traditional accounts, nevertheless he appears to have garnered a respectable standing as a scholar prior to his encounter with Viśvanātha. After his exchanges with Viśvanātha, humbled, he studies under him in Vṛndavāna. However, Kṛṣṇadeva did not remain in Vṛndavāna for too long and soon relocated to Jaipur to become the principle religious advisor to Jaisingh. At this juncture, he begins an extended public career assisting the king in multiple affairs. The tasks adopted were numerous, ranging from participating in legitimization projects and debates, to acting as a religious ambassador for the regime outside Jaipur, to compiling specialized works to address the interests and concerns of the king. His span of service to the king was extensive, beginning approximately in 1715 and enduring till around 1745.

During his employment, there are copious letters exchanged between him and the king, often with the king seeking clarification on various theological conundrums he encountered during this period. Since the king was his patron and passionate about the social and ritual ramifications of *karma-yoga* yet also a dedicated *bhakta* to Govindadeva, many responses were diplomatic in nature, accommodating the manifold interests of the king.⁴⁹ As well as providing elaborate responses to specific queries raised by the king, Kṛṣṇadeva also composed numerous texts between the period of 1719 and 1723. He also composed commentaries on his teacher Viśvanātha's works such as *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta* and other earlier prominent teachers of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school such as Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Vidagdha-mādhava*. He even commented on his contemporary associate Baladeva's *Prameya-ratnāvali*. He also compiled the *Siddhāntaikya-prakāśikā*, a text formed to establish harmony amongst contending sects, certainly instigated by the king to reinforce his efforts for unity in his realm. He composed the *Karma-vivṛti*, *Jñāna-vivṛti* and *Bhakti-vivṛti*, expositions on work, knowledge and devotion, fundamental tenets of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachings. These last four works seem to have been compiled on the insistence of the king to facilitate his political-religious interests.⁵⁰ It is also noteworthy that these works were not widely circulated in the greater Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community, consequently they are not referred to extensively in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava circles at the time nor in later representations of the tradition. Hence, it is tempting to suggest that such texts were composed as an outcome of the debates

⁴⁸ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.67 (Vṛndavāna-dhāmānurāgāvalī, Chp. 32, Sarvabhūmi Paṇḍit Caritra)

⁴⁹ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.71

⁵⁰ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.70

and discussions in the Jaipur courts and were reference works confined to usage solely during Jaisingh's reign. Nevertheless, as we will observe, the compositions reflect issues of public concern and thus inevitably held public implications, contributing to the reformation efforts in Jaipur.

By 1733, Kṛṣṇadeva was well known in Jaipur and a central figure in Jaisingh's proposals for religious reformation. In the courts of Jaipur, when the assembly required to cite exemplars of orthodox Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology, Kṛṣṇadeva along with earlier eminent teachers such as Rūpa, Sanātana and Jīva were referenced. Kṛṣṇadeva's works were exceptionally considered authoritative in the Jaipur courts, since Jaisingh was directly involved in the creation of a number of his works, consequently his writings became especially quotable.⁵¹ Kṛṣṇadeva was also deployed as an ambassador of the king and was tasked with canvassing for the king who was striving to achieve broad consensuses on theological matters even outside of Jaipur. For instance, he dispatched Kṛṣṇadeva to Bengal, a significant Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava hub to solicit support for theological developments arising from the Jaipur courts. Jaisingh also referred him to the courts of other kings to seek endorsement and support for his theological propositions. The king was especially keen to obtain agreements with other Vaiṣṇava kings for his religious proposals and Kṛṣṇadeva was pivotal in canvassing these views.⁵²

Kṛṣṇadeva's efforts did not go unnoticed and consequently he was rewarded handsomely with generous grants. For instance, he received the *puṇya-udik*, a special grant bestowed to maintain religious figures. A generous grant was also assigned to Rādhā-Vinodilal in 1716, the deity inherited by Kṛṣṇadeva from Viśvanātha. Indeed, this grant was comparable to the endowment provided to the state deity of Govindadeva. Furthermore, he possessed land in Jaipur, Kāmān, Varsānā and Vṛndavāna.⁵³ Hence, he accrued an extensive amount of land, indicative of the abundant wealth he accumulated during his service to the king. Kṛṣṇadeva's employment symbolized an intimacy between the Kachvāhā kings and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect never before witnessed. Jaisingh's great devotion to the Govindadeva deity, a preeminent deity for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, inevitably influenced the employment of Kṛṣṇadeva, and so commenced a prosperous period for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava-Kachvāhā relations.

⁵¹ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.72

⁵² Horstmann, *Visions of kingship*, p.22

⁵³ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.69

Baladeva

Another prominent student of Viśvanātha Cakravartī was Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa.⁵⁴ According to traditional accounts the initial portion of his life was expended in the Orissa region. In Orissa, he resided in a Mādhva monastery where he immersed himself in the systematic study of Madhva's teachings, the celebrated thirteenth century founder of the *dvaita* (dualism) school of Vaiṣṇavism. Eventually he acquired *sannyāsa* status in the tradition. During his stay in Puri, Baladeva appears to have been inspired by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava saint, Rādhā-Dāmodara Gosvāmī. Eventually Baladeva relocates and settles in Vṛndavāna. Submitting himself to Viśvanātha Cakravartī he studies the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* from him.⁵⁵

Baladeva was a prolific author, his writings included commentaries on the *Brahma-sūtras* known as the *Govinda-bhāṣya*, the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* known as the *Vaiṣṇavānandinī* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* known as the *Gītā-bhūṣaṇa*. He also produced commentaries on Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Laghu-bhagāvatamṛta*, the *Stavamālā*, Jīva Gosvāmī's *Tattvasandarbhā* and upon Rasikananda's *Syāmānandāśataka*. He also fashioned works on Vedānta philosophy such as *Siddhānta-ratna*, *Prameya-ratnāvalī*, *Siddhānta-darpaṇa*, *Vedānta-śyāmāntaka* and works on poetics like *Sāhitya-kaumudī*, *Vyākaraṇa-kaumudī*, *Kāvya-kaustubha*, *Pada-kaustubha*. Plus, independent devotional pieces such as *Aiśvarya-kādambinī*.⁵⁶

There remains some ambiguity surrounding the precise details concerning the key participants in the debates on behalf of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect. Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa are both portrayed as vital contributors in Jaipur, however contrary to proposals that they arrived together, there is overwhelming evidence to support the view that Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma arrived in Jaipur far earlier.⁵⁷ Instead Baladeva is generally presumed to have partaken in the debates of the Jaipur court sometime after Kṛṣṇadeva, possibly arriving in Jaipur even as late as the 1730s. Nevertheless, Baladeva played an imperative role in guarding the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect in the reign of Jaisingh. Baladeva's principal contribution was to legitimize the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect by offering a commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*, which also

⁵⁴ viśvanātha-cakravartī-śiṣya-baladeva-vidyābhūṣaṇa-racitāyām vaiṣṇavānandinyām ṭikāyām prathamō 'dhyāyaḥ Thus, ends the first chapter of the *vaiṣṇavānandinī* commentary (on the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa*) written by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, student of Viśvanātha Cakravartī. (Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.82)

⁵⁵ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.82

⁵⁶ Kiyokazu Okita, "Epistemology and Ontology II", in Ravi Gupta Ed., *Caitanya Vaisnava philosophy*, (London, 2014) p.79 and Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.93

⁵⁷ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.104

served to attach the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* with one of the four recognized Vaiṣṇava lines, a compulsory mandate in this era. Because of the conspicuous absence of a commentary by the tradition, not only did the sect invite criticisms but the king who had designated the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava deity of Govindadeva as the state deity, also became susceptible to scrutiny. Therefore, the king commissioned the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect to provide a commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*. Consequently, Baladeva composed the *Brahma-sūtra-karika-bhāṣya*, which was a succinct commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, generated as an immediate response to the appeal of Jaisingh. Following which he fashioned a more elaborate commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*, known as the *Govinda-bhāṣyam* named after the celebrated Govindadeva deity.⁵⁸ Baladeva was perfectly positioned to address the necessity of *sampradāya* affiliation on behalf of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect as he had been a student of the Mādhva tradition, so neither his textual contribution nor his participation in the debate appeared to be disingenuous. He also compiled a work known as *Tattva-dīpikā*, ‘the light on truth’, a comparison of various philosophical systems. This work also appears to have been commissioned by Jaisingh. These works like those of his associate Kṛṣṇadeva were the products of arduous debates and discussions in the Jaipur courts involving the king. Although not widely circulated amongst the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava communities either in Vṛndavāna or Bengal they were deemed essential accompaniments to the collections in the city palace library and sources of reference to respond to critics.

Baladeva developed into an influential figure in both Jaipur and Vṛndavāna, he held an exalted reputation in both regions. Even Kṛṣṇadeva compiled a commentary on Baladeva’s *Prameya-ratnāvalī*, which in of itself depicts the regard even established teachers held for Baladeva. Indeed, in the opening of the work, Kṛṣṇadeva describes Baladeva in glowing terms stating that he is ‘*Govindaikānti*, the pure *bhakta* of Govinda.’⁵⁹ Furthermore, testament to his illustrious status in the region, Baladeva’s temple in Jaipur was often referred to as the Vidyābhūṣaṇa Mandira rather than known by the deity that resided there. This also reflects the considerable time he expended in this temple in Jaipur.⁶⁰ Thus, he established himself as a leader for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, responsible for a range of activities such as selecting head priests at temples and hosting Jaisingh on his visits to Vṛndavāna. He continued to preserve cordial relations with the Kachvāhā kings as demonstrated by his correspondence with Mādhava Singh, Jaisingh’s successor. It appears that he remained a significant leader of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava

⁵⁸ Okita, *Hindu theology*, p.39

⁵⁹ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.94

⁶⁰ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.94

community even up till the mid-eighteenth century as evidence by his communication with Madho Singh in 1755.⁶¹

After the death of Madho Singh in 1768, the future prospect of the Kachvāhā dynasty was subject to great uncertainty. In light of the ongoing demise of the Mughal regime and the rise of Maratha power in North India, the outcome by 1789, a few years before the death of Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa, was that the Marathas had managed to exert complete control over the Vṛndavāna region. Following which they proceeded to supplant the grants which the Kachvāhā dynasty had provided for so long. This period marked the end of the extensive patronage and influence of the Kachvāhā regime in the Vṛndavāna region.⁶²

Challenges encountered by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition and their responses

Background

In this era, the conglomerate of sects consisted of religious entities that depended on royal patronage. The resources supplied by the monarchy enabled each of these sects to sustain temples and conduct grand gestures of worship for their respective deities. In response to the generous support provided by the political regime, sects were expected to refine the *bhakti* practices and doctrines they broadcast taking into consideration the deliberations of the royal courts. The relationship between the patron and recipient in this period also stimulated efforts of justification doctrinally and organisationally to differentiate oneself from their rivals. Therefore, in this competitive atmosphere, despite maintaining an intimate relation with king Jaisingh of Jaipur, the authenticity of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect became subject to scrutiny. This competitive environment in Jaipur, was further intensified with displacements in the religious power hierarchy in the state accelerated by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava deity of Govindadeva receiving the special favor of the king. Consequently, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect became a target of critics.

The numerous court discussions instigated by the king generated a process by which universal orthodox criteria were fashioned and established to be employed state-wide. With the rising competition and political pressures stemming from Jaipur the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect had to define itself in relation to the orthodox norms being disseminated. Consequently, they were compelled to participate in the reformations ordained by the imperial courts. However, this presented a serious challenge for the sect especially in light of the historical nature of the

⁶¹ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.92

⁶² Entwistle, *Braj Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage*, p.211

tradition. From the very commencement of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava movement, initiated by Caitanya, they had not perceived a necessity to implement ‘hard’ institutional mechanisms for governing such as a central administrative authority to regulate rigorously the different facets of the sect.⁶³ Instead, members of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect had functioned quite freely, unencumbered from any administrative restraints, during the presence of Caitanya, although he had intervened on specific occasions to act as the final decision maker on certain crucial matters. Caitanya hadn’t introduced any official regulating mechanisms nor measures to exert organizational control, nor did he appoint a successor or central governing body in preparation for his eventual departure. Perhaps caution was exhibited in this regard to deter unnecessary conflict and rivalry over resources upon his departure. In the wake of Caitanya’s departure three primary Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava communities formed around the regions of Navadvip, Puri, and Vraja. Considering the sect’s decentralized approach, each community displayed distinctive trends and characteristics. However, that is not to postulate there wasn’t any continuity found in these regions, the communities were connected instead by remarkably resilient ‘soft’ unifying symbols such as devotional literatures and practices which were shaped and eventually formalized by sect leaders in Vraja.⁶⁴

After the departure of Caitanya, Vraja became an increasingly significant dwelling for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava members. Caitanya had dispatched key sect members to Vraja to establish scholarly works and pilgrimage sites of Kṛṣṇa. Consequently, an important Sanskrit corpus of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literatures are shaped in Vraja derived from the foundational teachings of Caitanya. Following which we witness *bhaktas* also arrive in Vraja for tutelage from these initial teachers. They resided in Vraja for some time and subsequently travelled to other strongholds of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism to propagate the manner of devotion they had embraced in Vraja by principally disseminating the devotional literatures that they had studied. This corpus of works had a defining impact on the tradition, indeed, these works even play a central role in today’s contemporary representations of the tradition. Thus, the genius of these earlier teachers enabled a system of devotional doctrines, values and practices to be passed down through the succeeding generations more or less intact. Indeed, subsequent teachers even felt obliged to orientate their writings around the works of these authoritative teachers, thus regulating the theological output

⁶³ Joseph O’Connell, “Chaitanya Vaishnava Movement: Symbolic Means of Institutionalization”, in O’Connell, Joseph Ed., *Organisational and Institutional Aspects of Indian Religious Movements*, (New Delhi, 1999), p.236

⁶⁴ O’Connell, “Chaitanya Vaishnava Movement“, p.216

in the following generations.⁶⁵

An example of a soft symbol that contributed to the 'soft' institutionalization of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition is illustrated by Tony Stewart in his examination of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's biography of Caitanya, the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*. His analysis demonstrates how the work served to systemize and delineate the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava corpus of works. The *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* appears to have acted as a catalyst in bridging the divergent theological outlooks and practices that had developed between the various Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava hubs in Vṛndavāna, Orissa and Bengal, functioning essentially as a unifying treatise.⁶⁶ The biography weaves together the activities of Caitanya, principally those pertaining to the latter part of his life, along with the doctrines enunciated by the Gosvāmīs of Vṛndavana such as Rūpa who been beneficiaries of Caitanya's tutelage. In light of earlier hagiographies of Caitanya which appeared to endorse the interests of select communities, works were disseminated from Vṛndavana of which the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* figures prominently resulting in successfully contextualizing and ordering earlier biographies⁶⁷ and also becoming a crucial reference for theological matters.⁶⁸ Hence the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* was widely employed as an introduction to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava history and doctrines. Thus, the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*, as well as providing a critical account of Caitanya's later life and an insight into Gosvāmī theology, also became a vital rhetorical instrument deployed and circulated across Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava bases to inspire unification and standardization, thwarting divisive theological and ritual trajectories that had arisen in the various Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava regions. In this way, such soft symbols were used to define, diffuse and keep intact the essential orientation of the tradition, and it isn't until contemporary times that 'hard' institutions were seriously employed by the sect members.

Following the arrival of the Gosvāmīs, Vraja thrived as a place of pilgrimage. It became a site for new temples and their communities, a place of intense devotional practice and a hub for the production of foundational Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava works that would eventually be circulated in other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava locations. The sect had not been arbitrated externally nor rigidly, however, following the relocation of Govindadeva to Jaipur, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect had to validate their positions as they contended with a Kachvāhā king with considerable religious interests. In the early eighteenth century, as circumstances thrust the sect into this highly political world, factors emerge peripheral to the tradition that placed the doctrines and practices of the

⁶⁵ O'Connell, "Chaitanya Vaishnava Movement", p.229

⁶⁶ Stewart, *Final word*, p.197

⁶⁷ Stewart, *Final word*, p.193

⁶⁸ Stewart, *Final word*, p.340

tradition under serious scrutiny. Consequently, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect was the subject of debates and discussions in the Jaipur courts, at times becoming the targets of critics for undermining the universal state-wide requisite norms and standards disseminated. Indeed, never before had the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition been arbitrated by political powers in such a way, nor had their own leading members strived to control or organize the tradition in such a way, nevertheless they were compelled to respond to the political pressures of this era.

Origins of criticisms

Although the criticisms that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas encountered and their responses to counteract them are apparent, however the origins of the criticisms and challenges remain unclear. The sources of the criticisms were wide ranging, some even postulating that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava rights to worship Govindadeva were questionable, others claim that there was a dispute regarding the worship of Govinda over Nārāyaṇa. Furthermore, credentials demonstrating orthodoxy became a serious matter for Jaisingh's religious court, upon scrutinizing the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, the lack of a *Brahma-sūtra* commentary also invited criticisms. In addition, the lack of an explicit lineage connection to the four recognized *sampradāyas*, also became a concern, consequently the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition were accused of being outside the purview of the accepted four Vaiṣṇava orders of succession, and in spite of their half-hearted claimed connection to Mādhva, the tradition drew critics. Another cause of concern was the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava support for the *parakīyā* doctrine, Kṛṣṇa's amorous affairs with the young cowherd girls of Vraja outside the legalities of marriage which was viewed in some circles as immoral and inappropriate behavior for the divine. Critics particularly objected to the worship of Rādhā, the principal *gopī*, as she never married Kṛṣṇa according to Vedic ceremonies, and she is also not even cited in the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.⁶⁹ This brief description encapsulates the range of criticisms that were directed towards the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect during the reign of Jaisingh.

The Rāmānandīs whose prominent status was jeopardized as a consequence of the arrival of Govindadeva in Jaipur, are often associated with the criticisms. However, this was an era of religious and social reforms instigated by the king's ambitious *dharmic* ventures, therefore numerous religious groups had to adjust to adhere to the orthodox requirements established. Therefore, although the exact causes of the accusations targeting the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas are ambiguous, nevertheless it is clear that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect were obliged to respond to the objections raised, which even entailed being summoned by king Jaisingh to appear in the Jaipur courts to defend the tradition and partake in the debates. In the following sections, I will explore

⁶⁹ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.106

the exact responses from the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect to the specific accusations that they encountered.

Sampradāya Affiliation and Brahma-sūtra commentary

As part of the reform process initiated by Jaisingh and shaped by the *brahmin* scholars in this atmosphere of competition, the *bhakti* factions of Vṛndavāna were obliged to align themselves with recognized *sampradāyas* to preserve their legitimacy. Jaisingh inspired several assemblies to encourage *bhakti* traditions to undertake universal religious reforms. As a result of one such assembly, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition were required to demonstrate and justify their lineage affiliations.⁷⁰ In other words, alignment with the four Vaiṣṇava sects, was considered a vital benchmark of orthodoxy. During Jaisingh's rule only four Vaiṣṇava lineages were considered to be authentic, the Śrī *sampradāya* of Rāmānuja, the Brahmā *sampradāya* of Mādhva, the Rudra *sampradāya* of Nimbārka and the Sanaka *sampradāya* of Vallabha. It is thought that these lineages were derived from the authority of a verse ascribed to the *Padma Purāṇa* which describes:

Those mantras, which are devoid of [their connections with] traditions, are considered fruitless. Therefore, in the age of quarrel, there will be four *sampradāya* leaders. The four Vaiṣṇavas, [namely] Śrī, Brahmā, Rudra, Sanaka, are purifying the earth. In the age of Kali, they will certainly appear from Puruṣottama in Orissa. Śrī chose Rāmānuja, Brahma [chose] Madhvāchārya, Rudra [chose] Viṣṇu Svāmī, [and] four Sanas [chose] Nimbāditya.⁷¹

However, in spite of the political pressure, initially at least, it appears that some sect members attempted to avoid elaborate responses to the mandate of providing authentic lineage affiliations and instead elected to promote the notion that the founder of the sect was Caitanya who was non-different to Kṛṣṇa, and thus the supreme manifestation of God himself, also known as '*sampradāya-sahasrādhidaiva*', the presiding deity of countless *sampradāyas*. However, this

⁷⁰ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.116

⁷¹ Okita, *Hindu theology*, p.44

response was not deemed to be adequate by the Jaipur court and the competitors of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas⁷².

There had been earlier efforts in the tradition to connect the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* to Mādhva, specifically in Kavikarṇapūra's *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā*, 'a light to elucidate on the associates of Caitanya'. This well-known sixteenth century composition from Kavikarṇapūra,⁷³ is the earliest indication of a connection between the Caitanya and the Mādhva line. According to the text, Caitanya's antecedents are illustrated as follows:

- (1) Kṛṣṇa (paravyomeśvara), (2) Brahmā, (3) Nārada, (4) Vyāsa, (5) Mādhva,
- (6) Padmanābha, (7) Narahari, (8) Mādhava, (9) Akṣobhya, (10) Jayatīrtha,
- (11) Jñānasindhu, (12) Mahānidhi, (13) Vidyānidhi, (14) Rājendra, (15)
- Jayadharmā, (16) Puruṣottama, (17) Vyāsatīrtha, (18) Lakṣmīpati, (19)
- Mādhavendra (Puri), (20) Īśvara Puri, (21) Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (Gaura)⁷⁴.

Despite such attempts to draw connections between Caitanya and Mādhva, there were reservations regarding such declarations. Indeed, the disciplic succession list according to Kavikarṇapūra binding the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachers to Mādhva was considered contentious. Some have even proposed that the listed lineage in Kavikarṇapūra's *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* is an interpolation. For instance, Jack Hawley contends from several perspectives that the in the *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā*, the earlier portion of the list is an interpolation, although he also acknowledges that a text known as the *Bhaktamāla* was in circulation at that time, authored by a Dādūpanthī Rāghavadāsa in 1660 which also links Caitanya to Mādhva, reinforcing the widespread recognition of the Mādhva-Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava connection prior to this period.⁷⁵ However considering the contentious nature of such lineage assertions pressure continued to mount upon both Jaisingh and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect to supply a more rigorous defense to the critics that could no longer be evaded. Authentic affiliations became a serious matter, various traditions were obliged to respond, those that didn't such as the *mahant* of the Rādhā-Vallabha

⁷² Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.120

⁷³ Kavikarṇapūra's father, Śivānanda Sena was an important figure in Bengal and is known to have accumulated great wealth. He and his family were devoted to Caitanya. Śivānanda's son Paramānand Dās, as a child during an encounter with Caitanya in Puri, is said to have received the name Kavikarṇapūra, 'the ear-ornament of poets' from Caitanya himself.

⁷⁴ Okita, *Hindu theology*, p.44

⁷⁵ John Stratton Hawley, 'How do the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas Belong? Kavikarṇapūra, Jaisingh II, and the Question of Sampradāya', *The Journal of Hindu Studies*, 6.2 (2013), p.114–130

temple known as Rūpalal, who had denied any connection to the recognized *sampradāyas*, and thus snubbed Jaisingh's appeal, was forced to leave Vṛndavāna.⁷⁶

The Rāmānandī school who had been popular with the Kachvāhās over several generations were also required to respond to the political pressures. Although, there is some ambiguity surrounding the origins of Rāmānanda and the influences on his school of thought, it appears that in the initial stages of its formation the Rāmānandīs officially affiliated themselves with the earlier reputable Śrī *sampradāya* of Rāmānuja. The Rāmānandī sect continued to declare their connection to Rāmānuja throughout the reign of Jaisingh. However, once the sect became securely established after the eighteenth century, they did not promote such formal affiliations with the same zeal. Therefore, it could be argued that such tentative affiliations were declared during this era to bolster the status of sects in this period as traditional lineage affiliations became a significant mark of orthodoxy.⁷⁷ Such cases illustrate the pressures placed upon the Vaiṣṇava sects, hence it was considered critical that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect also responded positively to the mandate of providing an explicit orthodox *sampradāya* affiliation.

According to traditional accounts, as one of the foremost leaders of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school, Viśvanātha was initially invited to lead the response to this matter in person in Jaipur. However, Viśvanātha, had vowed never to leave Vṛndavāna, thus in his stead he directed his student, Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa to Jaipur, to address the issue. Baladeva, who was previously initiated in the Mādhva *sampradāya* was in an ideal position to demonstrate the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect's connection to Mādhva. In the twentieth century, Haridāsa Dāsa, an important member of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, provides the following account of Baladeva's participation to address this matter:

When, in Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī's final years, news reached Vṛndāvāna that the Bengalis performing service at the temples in Jaipur, being considered 'without legitimate lineage' (*asampradāyī*), were removed from their service, then Baladeva, by the order of Viśvanātha, went to Jaipur with Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma, and defeated the opposing groups in debate. Then he re-established the seat of the Bengalis in the mountainous region called Galtā and established the sacred image of Vijaya Gopāla. Even today, this sacred image is shining in the temple there. At that time, by the merciful

⁷⁶ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.119

⁷⁷ Okita, *Hindu theology*, p.43

command of Govindadeva, he composed Govindabhāṣya, and brought glory to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.⁷⁸

This version of events illustrates Baladeva's and Kṛṣṇadeva's participation in the defense of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition in Jaipur, both of whom had previously been students of Viśvanātha in Vṛndavāna at some point.

Baladeva was assigned to address the affiliation quandary on behalf of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, through depicting this connection explicitly in works like the *Govinda-bhāṣya*, his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras* and the *Prameya-ratnāvalī*, a short work, briefly describing nine truths. As well as declaring an explicit *sampradāya* link to Mādhva, he also provided a theological rationale for that link, which I will explore shortly. The *Govinda-bhāṣya* contains a teacher succession list or *guru-paramparā*, which delineates a *sampradāya* affiliation explicitly connecting Caitanya with Mādhva:

The succession of gurus is outlined as follows: (1) Śrī Kṛṣṇa, (2) Brahmā, (3) Devarṣi [Nārada], (4) Bādarāyaṇa, (5) Śrī Mādhva, (6) Padmanābha, (7) Śrīman Nṛhari, (8) Mādhava, (9) Akṣobhya, (10) Jayatīrtha, (11) Śrī Jñānasindhu, (12) Dayānidhi, (13) Śrī Vidyānidhi, (14) Rājendra, (15) Jayadharman, (16) Puruṣottama, (17) Brahmaṇya, (18) Vyāsatīrtha. (19) Lakṣmīpati, (20) Śrīman Mādhavendra, and his disciples (21) Īśvara, Advaita, and Nityānanda, who were all teachers of the world. And we worship (22) the disciple of Īśvara, Śrī Caitanya, the Lord. With the gift of love for Kṛṣṇa, he delivered the world.⁷⁹

In this way, Baladeva attempted to uncover an undeniable link between the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school and the philosopher Mādhva.

Although Viśvanātha didn't attend the Jaipur court discussions in person on this matter, nevertheless it does appear that he endeavored to contribute to the debate and support the affiliation to Mādhva through the composition of a text called *Gaurāṅga-gaṇa-svaṛūpa-tattva candrikā*, largely based on Kavikarṇapūra's *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā*.⁸⁰ However, despite these efforts by both Baladeva and even Viśvanātha the legitimacy of this claimed connection raised doubts due to the lack of theological consistency apparent when comparing the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava and Mādhva sect. This disparity is exemplified by Caitanya's encounter with the followers of

⁷⁸ Okita, *Hindu theology*, p.34

⁷⁹ Ravi Gupta, "Epistemology and Ontology I", in Ravi Gupta Ed., *Caitanya Vaisnava philosophy*, (London, 2014) p.115

⁸⁰ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.120

Mādhva during his travels in South India.⁸¹ Therefore, Baladeva was also tasked with demonstrating a theological compatibility between these two traditions in his works. Hence, in texts like the *Prameya-ratnāvalī* and the *Govinda-bhāṣya*, as well as outlining the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava lineage which assimilated Mādhva's lineage, he teaches Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology whilst maintaining a substantive affiliation with the Mādhva sect. Consequently, these specific works from Baladeva became vital contributions from the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition to address the critics and reflected adherence to the required standards in this period.

Baladeva's *Govinda-bhāṣya*, the first complete commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras* from the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect materialized as a significant facet of the orthodox reforms that were being circulated. As sects were scrutinized for legitimacy by *brahmins* and scholars at Jaisingh's courts, another key benchmark which had existed as a standard for respected orthodox traditions emerged, the *prasthāna-trayī*, a collection of commentaries on three canonical texts. These texts were considered instruments to attain religious knowledge for the purpose of salvation, consisting of *śruti*, *smṛti* and *nyāya* writings. The *Brahma-sūtras* by Bādarāyaṇa were known as the *nyāya-prasthāna*; the *Upaniṣads* were known as the *śruti-prasthāna*; and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* was regarded as the *smṛti-prasthāna*. These three texts have an extensive and celebrated commentarial legacy, from Shankara in the eight-century to Rāmānuja in the eleventh century and even Mādhva in the thirteenth century. All the advocates of the Vedānta schools all established commentaries on these texts. Therefore, it was no coincident that this era ushered in the first commentaries on the *Brahma-sūtras* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. Such novel literary contributions also showcased a historical continuity of works providing a common platform for comparison and unification between all sects.

It is worth noting that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect had earlier engaged with Vedānta through Jīva Gosvāmī who had commented on the first four *Brahma-sūtras*,⁸² nevertheless this was not considered sufficient in this period and hence, they were compelled to generate a more

⁸¹ (CC 2.9.228-251) p.475-478

⁸² Ravi Gupta has examined the early Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava engagement with Vedānta through the perspective of Jīva Gosvāmī. In the *sandarbhās*, Jīva deals with several fundamental notions of significance in Vedānta such as the nature of Brahman, the nature of the world and the living entities, and the relations between each of these concepts and so on. He also comments on the first four verses of the *Brahma-sūtras*, in his *catuḥsūtrī ṭīkā* in the *Paramātma-sandarbhā*. Thus, he engages with Vedānta relying on the tradition's own works, he also refers to the Upaniṣads to substantiate his views. Consequently, Jīva endeavored to devise a link between the Bhāgavata tradition and the Vedāntic tradition. (Ravi Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaisnava Vedanta of Jīva Goswami*, (London, 2007)).

comprehensive elucidation on the *Brahma-sūtras*. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school differed in their notion of orthodoxy and subsequently differed in their recognition of the relative significance of specific works such as the *Brahma-sūtras*. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect believed that the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* superseded all other texts in the Vedic corpus and so commentaries on works such as the *Brahma-sūtras* were not considered to be essential. However, in light of the reforms of this era instigated by the king, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect were obliged to substantiate their authenticity by following the Vedāntin traditions and providing comprehensive commentaries on *prasthāna-trayī* texts such as the *Brahma-sūtras*. Thus, it was deemed that a commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras* by a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava representative, which also integrated their affiliation to an authorized *sampradāya* was necessary. In this case the commentary required introducing Mādhva teachings within the framework of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology as a prerequisite for imperial endorsement. The significance of *Brahma-sūtras* commentaries in this era is also illustrated by the production of several commentaries on this work ascribed to Jaisingh himself, known as the *brahma-bodhinī*, *tattvārtha-dīpikā* and the *brahma-sūtra-vivṛti*. Furthermore, the city palace library holds numerous manuscripts of the *Brahma-sūtras*, and an additional twenty-five commentaries by the founders of various sects.⁸³ Therefore, it was almost impossible for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas sect to circumvent this mounting requirement. Nonetheless, up to this point the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school had evaded producing a widely accepted distinct commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*⁸⁴ and in this period, the absence of a commentary was deemed to be a violation of the expected orthodox standards by those positioned outside of the confines of the sect.

It was left to Baladeva who was nominated to author a commentary on behalf of the tradition. The king's bidding for a contribution on the *Brahma-sūtras* had to be realized, and thus the city palace library retains a document known as the *Brahma-sūtra-karika-bhāṣya*, a succinct commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*. Considering that two distinct works are preserved in the library on the *Brahma-sūtras* attributed to Baladeva, it seems plausible to infer that he had composed this *karika-bhāṣya* commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras* prior to producing a more elaborate explanation of the *Brahma-sūtras* known as the *Govinda-bhāṣya*,⁸⁵ named after the renowned Govindadeva deity of the Jaipur state.

⁸³ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.118

⁸⁴ They had also regarded the *Bhagāvata-Purāṇa* a natural commentary upon the *Brahma-sūtras*.

⁸⁵ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.117

Baladeva's early training with the Mādhva school enabled him to harness elements of Mādhva Vedānta to profit the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava cause. In his works Baladeva was able to demonstrate the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect's connection to Mādhva by expertly utilizing Mādhva's philosophy yet concluding with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava doctrines. On this subject, Kiyokazu Okita has gone to great lengths to detail how although in his *Govinda-bhāṣya*, Baladeva utilizes concepts and ideas of earlier teachers such as Mādhva, nevertheless he still ultimately rearticulates Jīva's theological position in his presentation, which reflected his fidelity to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect.⁸⁶ To further demonstrate his commitment to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, in the introduction to his *Govinda-bhāṣya* commentary, as well as declaring that this commentary has been configured in response to the appeal of the king, he also proclaims the supremacy of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect by stressing that the Mādhva *sampradāya* belongs to Caitanya. He verifies this claim by reasoning that Caitanya is non-different to Hari and Hari authorizes the Mādhva's school of thought.⁸⁷ In this way, Baladeva stresses that one should not misconstrue his willingness to promote a Mādhva affiliation as a declaration that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect is dependent on the Mādhva sect. Therefore, instead Baladeva appropriates Mādhva's Vedānta philosophy within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scheme to respond to the political pressures in this era.

Kiyokazu Okita has also suggested that the Mādhva affiliation with the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition is a 'formal one rather than theological one'.⁸⁸ In other words, Baladeva demonstrated a formal connection with the Mādhva tradition, showcasing a level of theological compatibility and continuity deemed acceptable in response to the political pressures, even though in essence Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava doctrine is theologically independent of Mādhva Vedānta. David Buchta also asserts that it is more apt to view Baladeva's promotion of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava affiliation with the Mādhvas not as a consequence of his exposure to the Mādhva tradition in his earlier life but primarily as a result of the religious reforms stemming from Jaisingh, and therefore Baladeva's contribution was a 'political maneuver' to safeguard the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* in this period of scrutiny.⁸⁹

Thus, Baladeva's timely commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras* helped to strengthen the position and authority of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect during the reign of Jaisingh II. The commentary served multiple critical purposes, as well as bringing credibility to the tradition by

⁸⁶ Okita, *Hindu theology*, p.125

⁸⁷ Okita, *Hindu theology*, p.128

⁸⁸ Okita, *Hindu theology*, p.44

⁸⁹ David Buchta, "Baladeva's Multi-Regional Influences", *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies*, 15.2, (2007), p.81–94.

meeting the reforms necessitating commentaries on the traditionally accepted *prasthāna-trayī* of the Vedāntins, it also demonstrated a philosophical synergy between Mādhva Vedānta and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta, bolstering the assertion of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava affiliation with the Mādhva *sampradāya* which was deemed crucial in this age of religious competition and reform. Therefore, Baladeva's promotion of a *sampradāya* connection with Mādhva fashioned in the eighteenth century could be inferred to be one of convenience, prompted by the reforms that permeated Jaisingh's domains.

The Parakīyā doctrine

In this period dominated by religious reforms, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect's endorsement of the *parakīyā* doctrine⁹⁰ was considered controversial and discordant with the reforms induced by Jaisingh. The notion that the pinnacle of *bhakti* or devotion was embodied in the extramarital amorous love displayed by Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and expressing adoration for Kṛṣṇa enjoying intimate affairs with the young married girls of Vṛndavāna became sources of controversy. In this era, promoting such dealings was discouraged, such behavior was deemed inappropriate and posed a danger to the ethical and moral framework that was expected within the public domain at the time. The Jaipur courts were concerned that endorsing such a portrayal of the divine would incite immorality and discredit the scripturally ordained orthodox injunctions within religious communities that had become of major significance to uphold during Jaisingh's reign.

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition recognized that the promotion of *parakīyā-vāda* as superior to *svakīyā-vāda* was a sensitive issue which attracted critics and consequently within the tradition there had already been numerous theological attempts to downplay the *parakīyā* aspect even prior to the debates that ensued during the reign of Jaisingh. Jīva Gosvāmī is perhaps the most senior and renowned Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teacher who did not advocate *parakīyā-vāda* explicitly, instead he appears to offer the most convincing arguments to guard the tradition from ethical disputes by supporting *svakīyā-vāda*. Indeed, Jan Brzezinski claims that Jīva goes to great lengths to defend and promote the *svakīyā* doctrine and suggests his position on this matter can be detected throughout his works including his commentaries upon Rūpa Gosvāmī's works. Jīva's renowned composition, the *Gopālacampū*, is especially a testament to the promotion of the

⁹⁰ *parakīyā* means 'belonging to another' and in this regard *parakīyā-vāda* indicates the doctrine of Kṛṣṇa's relations with the *gopīs* who are married to others, this contrasts *svakīyā-vāda* which implies those that are in essence always married to Kṛṣṇa.

svakīyā doctrine as it contains a detailed narration of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā's marriage ceremony.⁹¹ Furthermore, in Jīva's explanation to Rūpa's drama, the *Lalitāmādhava*, Jīva rationalizes the early exchanges between Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* outside the pale of marriage, by suggesting this permitted the growth of aesthetic emotions and nevertheless they eventually do get married and for this reason, in Jīva's view, their early liaison presents no moral problem.⁹² Jīva also reasons that in Goloka, the transcendental sphere, Kṛṣṇa remains the husband of the *gopīs* eternally, and their fictitious marriage to others in the earthly realm is illusory, based on the notion of illusory *gopīs*.⁹³ Indeed, this perception resembles the descriptions in the *Rāmāyana* of an illusory form of Sītā or Māyā Sītā, who is abducted by the king of Lanka, Rāvaṇa, instead of the real Sītā.⁹⁴ Thus, Jīva's views presented a challenge for the *parakīyā-vāda* faction of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect as his interpretation was claimed to be an elucidation on Rūpa Gosvāmī's teachings, his uncle and one of the pivotal compilers of the foundational Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava corpus of works produced in Vraja. Although there is some ambiguity over Rūpa Gosvāmī's position on this debate, whichever side of the debate one was on, Rūpa is portrayed as the ultimate authority for both.⁹⁵ It is also worth noting that the accepted stance of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect after the departure of Jīva was of one that overwhelmingly supported the *parakīyā-vāda* position, displayed by figures such as Viśvanātha, in spite of the political pressures encountered in Jaisingh's era.

Considering the ambivalent Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava position on this issue, it gave rise to factions, some of those who stressed the *svakīyā* doctrine advocating a marriage between Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, and others who supported the *parakīyā* doctrine that the *gopīs* were married to others as superior. The nature of Kṛṣṇa's relations with the *gopīs* became a source of debate and conflict, raising concerns that the conduct of Kṛṣṇa would have ramifications on moral attitudes and behavioral conduct of the populace in North India. The issue became further exacerbated as the renowned Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava deity of Govindadeva was an intrinsic symbol of religious

⁹¹ Jan Brzezinski, "Does Kṛṣṇa marry the *gopīs* in the End?", *The Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies*, 5.4, (1997), p.93

⁹² Okita, Kiyokazu, "Ethics and Aesthetics in Early Modern South Asia", *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, 22.1 (2018), p.36

⁹³ Okita, "Ethics and Aesthetics", p.36

⁹⁴ Caitanya on his travels in South India arrives at the Rāmeśvara temple, subsequently he hears of this episode from brahmins narrating the Kūrma Purāṇa. Māyā Sītā, take's Sītā's place and is abducted by Rāvaṇa, while the real Sītā is concealed by Agni. After the death of Ravana and once rescued, Sītā is required to undergo an ordeal by fire where Agni returns her to Rāma. (Based on a description in [CC 2.9.184-191] p.472-473)

⁹⁵ Brzezinski, 'Does Kṛṣṇa marry the *gopīs* in the End?', p.50

legitimacy for the king in the state, subsequently support of the *parakīyā* doctrine by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school also brought the state deity into disrepute. Considering the king's legitimacy was built upon the notion of being the divine representative of the deity, he endeavored to defend Govindadeva from such criticisms. Consequently, Jaisingh directed numerous debates in Jaipur on the matter and the outcome of these discussions led to the mandate that only the *svakīyā-vāda* doctrine should be endorsed and propagated. Hence, it was accepted that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were always married and doubts over their illegitimate dealings were dismissed. This position appeared to be vital for a king endeavoring to instill morality amongst those he ruled. Indeed, Jaisingh had already instigated several reforms in Vṛndavāna, such as issuing orders that *sadhus* should not keep guns or have illegitimate relations with women. Furthermore, in response to concern over illicit activities, Jaisingh even established a colony in Mathurā known as Vairāgyapura, to provide land and shelter for *sadhus* that had been instructed to marry due to inappropriate behavior not befitting an ascetic.⁹⁶

Kṛṣṇa's esoteric liaisons with the married village girls posed a threat to moral ideals and were at times misconstrued becoming the justification for nefarious deeds. This inevitably attracted critics and if not dealt with prudently could thwart the king's efforts to foster morality. To appease the king and assist him in his reformation schemes, the head priests of the four main Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples in Vṛndavāna and Jaipur provided a signed letter addressing his concern:

Śrī Sanātana, Rūpa and Jīva Gosvāmīs all agree that Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa lila is *parakīyā* in the manifest lila of this world, but *svakīyā* in the unmanifest (eternal) lila of the other world. But because the lila are eternal, then both *svakīyā* and *parakīyā* are equal, and are both the height of *rasa*. This is because the emotion felt for Kṛṣṇa (*madhana-mohana*) is to be analysed in a similar way to natural love (and *parakīyā* and *svakīyā* are both accepted in analyses of everyday love). Because all lila are eternal, it is quite fitting that if one worships *svakīyā* lila one will attain the lila of the Lord. And it is just as fitting that if one worships the *parakīyā* lila, one will also attain the lila of the Lord. And this state of *parakīyā* is created by *yoga maya* so that Kṛṣṇa can taste *parakīyā-rasa*. Therefore, it is said that Abhimanyu simply thought he was the husband of Radhika. Words are used in this sense, 'He considered himself as a husband, but was not really so', just as when we say that somebody fancies

⁹⁶ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.114

himself as a pandit. Rūpa Gosvāmī has confirmed this in his *parakīyā lila prarthana* poem in the *Stavavali*.⁹⁷

This position declared by the head priests is somewhat of a diplomatic stance which lends itself to endorse both the *svakīyā* and *parakīyā* doctrines. Thus, this viewpoint provided support in the king's exertions to promote the *svakīyā-vāda* doctrine, assisting him in the administration of his citizens yet also did not compromise the popular perspective within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect in endorsing the supremacy of the *parakīyā-vāda* position.

Jaisingh also sought to obtain wider support for the *svakīyā-vāda* doctrine, petitioning even the other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava stronghold of Bengal. In Jaipur and Vṛndavāna, state-wide reforms were employed to enforce some sort of orthodox Vaiṣṇavism, however in contrast, Bengal was rooted in the tantric tradition and such reforms were not employed in the region nor was within Jaisingh's political jurisdiction. Kṛṣṇadeva Bhaṭṭācārya, a key figure at the court of Jaipur and Jaisingh's trusted ally in shaping an orthodox form of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, was deputed to relay the court decisions in Jaipur to generate some sort of consensus and universal approval on this matter. However, in the courts of Bengal, the king's proposition encountered strong resistance and his position proved to be alarming for the Bengal Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community. Indeed, at the court of the Nawab in Bengal, the delegates from Jaipur were even threatened with dismissal from the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community.⁹⁸ Kṛṣṇadeva Bhaṭṭācārya who advocated the *svakīyā* view on behalf of Jaisingh was ultimately defeated on the matter by another great scholar of the eighteenth century, Rādhāmohana Thākura, a descendant of Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, one of Jīva's prominent disciples.⁹⁹

It was not only in Bengal where Jaisingh's position received criticism, even in Vṛndavāna, from Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect leaders such as Viśvanātha Cakravartī. Viśvanātha appears to advocate the *parakīyā-vāda* proposition without compromise. Indeed, Viśvanātha Cakravartī wrote a text known as the *Svakīyātva-nirāsa-vicāra* or an examination of the refutation of *svakīyā-vāda*, that solely focuses on the topic, likely in response to the debates that were prevalent in that period. He proposes numerous arguments to advocate the *parakīyā-vāda* position and reject the *svakīyā-vāda* position. For instance, he argues that although some in Vṛndavāna claim that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa married, he contends that such a marriage is not plausible by problematizing the timing of the marriage, by illustrating flaws in various marriage scenarios.¹⁰⁰ He also declares

⁹⁷ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.115

⁹⁸ Horstmann, *Visions of kingship*, p.22

⁹⁹ Delmonico, *Trouble in Paradise*, p.99

¹⁰⁰ Okita, "Ethics and Aesthetics", p.39

that the *parakīyā-vāda* activities of Kṛṣṇa take place not only in the earthly realm of Vṛndavāna, as Jīva had claimed, but also operate in the spiritual realm of Goloka Vṛndavāna, for there is no distinction between the two realms in respect to Kṛṣṇa’s activities.¹⁰¹ In this way, Viśvanātha strives to counter Jīva’s numerous arguments in support of the *svakīyā-vāda* doctrine, nevertheless he also stresses that his specific criticism is targeted at those who utilize Jīva’s works to promote the *svakīyā* doctrine over the *parakīyā* doctrine and not to Jīva himself. Indeed, Viśvanātha resolves that Jīva’s real purpose was to advocate the *parakīyā* doctrine.¹⁰² Therefore from Viśvanātha’s perspective, even if Jīva was promoting *svakīyā-vāda*, this was not his actual position and instead Jīva had highlighted this alternate view to appease the critics targeting the sect.

In summary, the *parakīyā-vāda* position advocated by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect in regard to Kṛṣṇa’s relations with the *gopīs* had remained a topic of controversy, requiring rationalization by even the celebrated Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scholar Jīva Gosvāmī who appears to have emphasized *svakīyā-vāda* to pacify the critics of the tradition and to detract from the *parakīyā-vāda* dispute. However, despite the attempts by the earlier teachers to play down the doctrine of *parakīyā-vāda*, in the early eighteenth century the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition’s stance still left them vulnerable to criticism. Controversy over the matter escalated with the participation of Jaisingh, who was concerned over the impact of *parakīyā-vāda* on the legitimacy of Govindadeva and his aspirations of orthodox moral conduct in his realm. Jaisingh compelled his intimate aide, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theologian Kṛṣṇadeva Bhaṭṭācārya to propagate the superiority of *svakīyā-vāda* over *parakīyā-vāda* in Jaipur, and even as far as Bengal. However, Kṛṣṇadeva’s attempts and Jaisingh’s endeavors were stifled encountering robust rejections from the Bengal Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava leaders and even the renowned Viśvanātha Cakravartī of Vṛndāvana. It appears from the evidence we have, Jaisingh and Kṛṣṇadeva were not as successful as they had anticipated in promoting the *svakīyā* doctrine, which didn’t achieve universal acceptance like some of their other reform initiatives.

¹⁰¹ Okita, “Ethics and Aesthetics”, p.40

¹⁰² Okita, “Ethics and Aesthetics”, p.41 and Brzezinski. ‘*Does Kṛṣṇa marry the gopīs in the End?*’, p.95

Also, Jīva in his Ujjvalanīlamanī commentary deliberately attempts to be ambiguous regarding his position on the *svakīyā* and *parakīyā* doctrines, possibly indicating his comments which promote the *svakīyā* position, were written for the sake of others and in essence not his actual position. [Okita, “Ethics and Aesthetics”, p.38]

Tension between *bhakti* and public engagement

Another emerging concern in the reign of Jaisingh entailed the tension between the practice of *bhakti*, which at times implied the transcendence of conventional norms and the interests of a king who was aspiring to devise orthodox behavioural norms for communities within his domain. In this period, several Vaiṣṇava orthodox orders grappled with rising non-orthodox elements within their respective communities, which at times placed them in a problematic predicament bearing in mind that they were governed by a monarch who was keen on reforms to facilitate orthodox behaviour and conduct within his realm. Such issues also became the focus of discussions and debates, the culmination of which demanded the configuration of specialized works by the various sects that participated, outlining how their particular sect's theological positions integrated with the framework of Jaisingh's vision for *dharmic* conduct. Jaisingh referred to Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya on matters pertaining to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect on many occasions, and in this instance, Kṛṣṇadeva was impelled to pioneer the creation of a new genre of works promoting orthodox conduct on behalf of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect. In an identical way, other sects also generated comparable works to appease the king. Kṛṣṇadeva also partook in prohibiting works that fuelled the rising non-orthodox *bhakti* trends witnessed.

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect was a prominent case of a *bhakti* tradition to be divided by a conflict over the role of orthodox practices such as *karma* which entailed the performance of Vedic rituals and participation in social schemes such as *varṇāśrama*. This conflict appeared to stem from the opposing views of some of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava followers in Bengal, who believed that the practice of *karma* was rendered redundant once one embarked on the path of *bhakti*. This unorthodox faction was largely inspired by the one of the sternest critics of *karma*, Rūpa Kavirāja, who was active in the early seventeenth century. He had declared himself to be a representative of Rūpa Gosvāmī, whose foundational teachings delineated the science of *bhakti*. Rūpa Kavirāja's interpretation of critical passages of Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* attracted great interest, resulting in a schism between the orthodox and non-orthodox factions of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect in North India. This rupture in orthodox practices was alarming for the *dharmic* king, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava orthodox scholars responded through textual works, however the rise in Rūpa Kavirāja's following was not quelled. Subsequently, in 1727 the king took drastic action, culminating in the prohibition of Rūpa Kavirāja's teachings and practices not just in Jaipur but also in Vṛndavāna. The Kachvāhā ruler passed this decision in his capacity as the governor of Agra and Mathurā, roles he had held since 1722. As well as an embargo issued upon Rūpa Kavirāja's teachings, his followers were also branded criminals and divested of their rights

over their religious estates.¹⁰³ However, the case of Rūpa Kavirāja was not unique and was just one example of many during this period of reform, instigated by a religious king attempting to modify and reorganize Vaiṣṇava orders. The orthodox members of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school worked closely with king Jaisingh in his endeavors to counteract non-orthodox practices within Jaipur and Vṛndavāna, and neutralizing the influence of Rūpa Kavirāja became an imperative agenda for all parties. This collaboration between the orthodox Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava faction and the Kachvāhā ruler was exemplified by the partnership formed between Kṛṣṇadeva and Jaisingh.

Considering it was deemed important enough to convene an assembly specially to condemn his works, Rūpa Kavirāja who lived from the late seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century, must have offered a significantly persuasive yet provocative teaching during this era, therefore I will examine his position. Although, there are differing opinions on Rūpa Kavirāja's background, some advocated that he was a follower of Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, the student of Jīva Gosvāmī, whereas others propose that he was a disciple of Hemalatā Thākuraṇī, the daughter of Śrīnivāsa Ācārya.¹⁰⁴ However, a short biography of Rūpa Kavirāja is narrated in the *Narottama Vilāsa*, a work formulated by Narahari Dāsa in the eighteenth century, which offers a further alternate perspective on Rūpa Kavirāja's background.¹⁰⁵ According to this text, Rūpa Kavirāja accompanied his teacher Kṛṣṇacaraṇa Cakravartī to Vṛndavāna visiting places of pilgrimage pertaining to Kṛṣṇa. Upon his visit to Rādhā-Kuṇḍa, he encountered Mukunda Dāsa, a student of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, the author of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. After being granted permission, he remained with Mukunda Dāsa to study the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* from him. Rūpa Kavirāja resided and received tutelage in Rādhā Kuṇḍa, becoming a respected member of the community. However, after Mukunda's death he is spoken of in unflattering terms, primarily because of an offence towards a Vaiṣṇava known as Kṛṣṇapriya Thākuraṇī,¹⁰⁶ the granddaughter of Gangānārāyaṇa Cakravartī, whose son and disciple, was Rādhārāmana Cakravartī, the teacher of Viśvanātha Cakravartī.

Rūpa Kavirāja's ill-treatment of Kṛṣṇapriya Thākuraṇī is detailed as follows. Numerous Vaiṣṇavas had congregated to hear Rūpa Kavirāja present a sermon on the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa*,

¹⁰³ Horstmann Monika, *Why Ritual?*, (Wiesbaden, 2005), p.277

¹⁰⁴ David L. Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, (Oxford, 1988), p.98

¹⁰⁵ Delmonico, *Trouble in Paradise*, p.93

¹⁰⁶ According to the *Narottama Vilāsa*, Kṛṣṇapriya Thākuraṇī became dear to Mukunda, as she had cared for him just before his death, and as a result he offered her a Govardhana Śīla which had been passed on from Caitanya to Raghunātha dāsa to Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja and eventually to Mukunda. This description of Kṛṣṇapriya Thākuraṇī portrays her special position within the Vaiṣṇava community. (Delmonico, *Trouble in Paradise*, p.94)

this gathering also included Kṛṣṇapriya Ṭhākurani. During his recital, he noticed that she continued to utter the names of Kṛṣṇa, slighted, he rebuked her, bellowing how dare she conduct both activities simultaneously? In other words, how can one chant the names of Kṛṣṇa whilst simultaneously hearing the narrations of *Bhagāvata Purāṇa*? She responded protesting that she had no control over her tongue which was habituated to continuously repeat Kṛṣṇa's names and that this tendency did not impede her hearing of the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa*. In reply, Rūpa Kavirāja became further irritated and rejected her explanation. Due to his unwarranted reprimand of Kṛṣṇapriya Ṭhākurāṇi, the text tells us that he would go on to fabricate his own philosophy which endorsed deviant concepts leading to non-orthodox factions.¹⁰⁷ This possibly embellished and polemical account of Rupa Kavirāja's deviancy and demise served as a warning to practitioners of the consequences of ill-treating a Vaiṣṇava, perhaps spurred on by sectarian views in the eighteenth century reflected in accounts such as the *Narottama Vilāsa*.¹⁰⁸

Only two of Rūpa Kavirāja's works have survived which supplied the seminal ideas that formed the foundation for the troublesome non-orthodox Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava factions in North India during the reign of Jaisingh. These works were known as the *Sāra-saṃgraha* and the *Rāgānugā-vivṛti*.¹⁰⁹ In both of these compositions he builds on the teachings of Rūpa Gosvāmī in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. Much of his work is in sync with Rūpa Gosvāmī's teachings, however, the contentious issue lies in the practice of *rāgānugā-bhakti* which necessitates some sort of imitation of those who reside in Vraja.¹¹⁰ His stance on the *parakīyā* doctrine, a critical concern in this era was not the focus of the criticism he attracted, but rather it was his perspective on *rāgānugā-bhakti* which drew detractors far and wide. Although challenged by the Jaipur courts, his support for *parakīyā-vāda* was consistent with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachers such as Viśvanātha Cakravartī which was accepted widely within the tradition. Instead, it was his interpretation of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, devotion driven by passion that brought Rūpa Kavirāja's teachings the severest criticism, from not only Jaisingh's council but also Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect leaders. His problematic position was encapsulated in his foundational doctrine, the four varieties of *bhakti* practice or

¹⁰⁷ According to the *Narottama Vilāsa*, he would also contract leprosy because of his transgression and subsequently left for Orissa, where he died in great pain. The text states that upon his death, he became a ghost who would haunt those who offend Vaiṣṇavas.

¹⁰⁸ He also became an emblem for later sahajiyā sects. Such developments may have also influenced Gauḍīya accounts of Rūpa Kavirāja to distance him from the tradition as seen in interpretations such as the *Narottama Vilāsa*. (Lucian Wong, "Against Vaiṣṇava Deviance: Brāhmaṇical and *Bhadralok* Alliance in Bengal", *Religions*, 9.57 (2018), p.15)

¹⁰⁹ Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p.99

¹¹⁰ Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p.99

bhakti-sādhanas.¹¹¹ In the surviving works of Rūpa Kavirāja one can detect the underlying notions from which emerged numerous debates on whether *rāgānugā-bhakti* should be executed with the physical and mentally conceived body.¹¹² The key to Rūpa Kavirāja’s belief was his interpretation of Rūpa Gosvāmī’s verse in BRS 2.295:

The one desirous of attaining one of the emotional states of the Vrajaloka should do performative acts of service (*sevā*) in a manner which imitates the Vrajaloka with both the “perfected body” (*siddha-rūpa*) and the “practitioner’s body” (*sādhaka-rūpa*).¹¹³

The implications Rūpa Gosvāmī intended in this verse became the subject of contention. Rūpa Gosvāmī, says no more about the upper and lower boundaries of the action of the perfected residents of Vṛndavāna in the spiritual realm to be imitated. However, the injunction of imitative action could not be ignored and it was accepted that some sort of plagiarized action was required, however the ambiguity of this verse permitted varied interpretations. Some argued that the imitation of the residents of Vṛndavāna is strictly confined to the mental sphere and not the public or physical arena, however the imitative responsibility with respect to the *sādhaka-rūpa* or practitioner’s physique still required to be clarified. In contrast, Rūpa Kavirāja contended that the *bhakta* was required to imitate the residents of Vṛndavāna such as the *gopīs* literally with both his mental and physical body. Subsequently, he is frequently charged for having provided justification for the physical imitation of the *gopīs* by dress and behavior in Jaipur and Vṛndavāna.¹¹⁴

As one’s faith grows via the practice of *bhakti*, traversing various stages, the *bhakta* develops *bhava* culminating in unblemished love for Kṛṣṇa. However, this achievement presented a problem, for as progress on the *bhakti* path matures, one’s obligations to expected worldly customs were questioned. According to the orthodox camp, the advanced *bhakta*, with his interior perfected body (mental body) or *siddha-deha* should reside in Goloka Vṛndavāna following in the footsteps of the residents and with his *sādhaka-rūpa* or practitioner’s body he operates in the public sphere following social norms grounded on orthodox *dharma*.¹¹⁵ However, Rūpa Kavirāja propagated an alternative mode of living, as explained by David Haberman:

¹¹¹ Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p.99

¹¹² Delmonico, *Trouble in Paradise*, p.92

¹¹³ Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p.96

¹¹⁴ Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p.97

¹¹⁵ Hortsmann, *Why Ritual?*, p.279

Rūpa Kavirāja insists again and again that the imitation of the Vrajaloka must be external as well as internal, and also that the external and internal forms are the same, that is that they both imitate the Vrajaloka. He does not accept the interpretation which insists that the practitioner imitate the Vrajaloka only in the mind and follow the injunctions of *vaidhi-bhakti* with the body. This procedure, he informs us, would only lead to *Dvārakā*, not to the intended goal, *Vraja*. In fact, Rūpa Kavirāja goes as far as to insist that ‘in this *sādhana* which imitates the Vrajaloka, the practitioner is forbidden to perform acts of *vaidhi* with the *siddha-rūpa*, and even more so with *sadhaka-rūpa*.’¹¹⁶

Rūpa Kavirāja also vindicated the physical imitation of the inhabitants of *Vṛndavāna* by reasoning that the initiated practitioner’s physical body was of a different ontological nature and therefore free from vice. He also alerted one to critics, warning that the uninitiated due to their immature devotion may find fault in them when they dress and behave as a female *gopī* for instance.¹¹⁷ This viewpoint proved to be problematic and became the inspiration for unorthodox practices in Jaisingh’s reign, exhibited by the rise of so-called *sadhus* emulating the female confidants of *Kṛṣṇa* in dress and behavior in both *Vraja* and *Jaipur*.

The followers of Rūpa Kavirāja during the rule of Jaisingh generated special interest as they exemplified the tension between *bhakti* and the adoption of orthodox conduct. They raised the question as to what is one’s obligation to orthodox practice defined by notions such as *karma* if a person had embarked on a path which seemingly led to the transcendence from worldly activities. Consequently, surely the public responsibilities pertaining to this world became meaningless in light of such truths. In other words, the critical ramification of Rūpa Kavirāja’s presentation was that as one proceeded on the path of *bhakti* one became exempt from the social obligations of the world and instead adopted the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* or devotion inspired by passion which permitted the transcendence of social conventions. As well as being troublesome for the orthodox factions of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* sect, it also proved to be a severe impediment for good governance with Rūpa Kavirāja’s theological exposition having alarming social repercussions. Subsequently, this challenge contributed to a testing period for the orthodox branch of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* sect as well as the king’s reformation endeavors.

¹¹⁶ Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p.102

¹¹⁷ Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p.103

Rūpa Kavirāja's influence was far reaching, it was not only in this era that his teachings had a drastic bearing. Later *sahajiyā* sects appear to claim connection to the works of Rūpa Kavirāja, as evidenced by Rūpa Kavirāja's inclusion in many of the *sahajiyā* lineages as a disciple of Mukunda dāsa.¹¹⁸ He became a symbol for later *sahajiyā* factions, especially in Bengal as they traced their *sahajiyā* practices to him.¹¹⁹ Although, Rūpa Kavirāja's position in support of *sahajiyā* practices appears dubious, as upon close inspection his theological stance as presented in his works do not comprehensively endorse *sahajiyā* doctrines. Nevertheless, he appears to deliver an abstract yet legitimizing foundation for embryonic *sahajiyā* ideas to form, particularly the belief that *rāgānugā-bhakti* should be executed with the mental and physical bodies.¹²⁰

Kṛṣṇadeva Bhaṭṭācārya, Jaisingh's loyal aide and preeminent Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scholar was deployed to refute the explanations of Rūpa Kavirāja in the courts. Upon Kṛṣṇadeva refuting the interpretations, in 1731, an imperial declaration was delivered announcing the prohibition of Rūpa Kavirāja's works.¹²¹ To supplement this ruling, further efforts were undertaken within the tradition to curb the influence of Rūpa Kavirāja, as the seminal ideas of Rūpa Kavirāja's doctrine remained firmly entrenched in the thoughts of his followers. A selection of writings from Viśvanātha, a prolific Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava author of his time, are composed as responses to external situations encountered by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community. The stance adopted by Rūpa Kavirāja was meticulously rejected by Viśvanātha. Viśvanātha had already compiled the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu bindu*, which was a summary of Rūpa's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, nevertheless he sensed the necessity to compose a work specifically on the category of *rāgānugā*, the *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, to offset the mounting deviant interpretations of this stage of *bhakti* practice.

In contrast to Rūpa Kavirāja, Viśvanātha asserts that even when one attains the stage of *rāgānugā*, the *bhakti* practitioner is still bound by the injunctions of scripture. Indeed, he states that 'one who claims that *rāgānugā-bhakti* is always and completely beyond the injunctions of scripture...continually has experienced, experiences and will experience ruin and is to be censured.'¹²² From Viśvanātha's perspective the only difference between *rāgānugā-bhakti* and *vaidhi-bhakti* in relation to the *sadhaka-rūpa* or the practitioner's physical body is the motivating force, the physical actions however remain the same, constrained by the injunctions and regulations of *vaidhi-bhakti*. Therefore, acts in relation to *vaidhi-bhakti* that are inspired by an

¹¹⁸ Delmonico, *Trouble in Paradise*, p.100

¹¹⁹ Delmonico, *Trouble in Paradise*, p.100

¹²⁰ Wong, "Against Vaiṣṇava Deviance", p.14

¹²¹ Delmonico, *Trouble in Paradise*, p.98

¹²² Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p.105

intense longing or passion and not simply rules, are accepted as *rāgānugā-bhakti* in Viśvanātha's view.¹²³

In spite of this noble attempt by Viśvanātha to explain the intricacies of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, Rūpa Gosvāmī's reference to the imitative action of the inhabitants of Vṛndavāna in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.295 could not be overlooked and required further explanation. The question of what Rūpa precisely intended by this stipulation in relation to the *sādhaka-rūpa* remained ambiguous. To address this matter, Viśvanātha further proclaimed that with the *siddha-rūpa*, the interior perfected body, one should imitate the residents of Vṛndavāna, however with the *sadhaka-rūpa*, the physical performance is executed in a manner which imitates Rūpa, Sanātana and so on, who were exemplary ascetics of Vṛndavāna who established and followed various injunctions themselves.¹²⁴ Therefore Viśvanātha's ingenious solution was to recommend that the *rāgānugā-bhakti* practitioner should emulate the leading teachers of tradition internally and outwardly. For these very teachers had delineated the specifics of the *rāgānugā-bhakti* process in literary form and had also demonstrated its model expression physically in the public sphere. Teachers such as Rūpa Gosvāmī who were universally accepted to be perfected souls in the *bhakti* school,¹²⁵ internally resided in Vṛndavāna however outwardly followed the conventional norms pertaining to their positions in society as ascetics in Vṛndavāna. In this way Viśvanātha presented an ingenious refutation to counter the impact of Rūpa Kavirāja's teachings.

It wasn't only Viśvanātha from the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect that offered textual contributions upon this matter. Kṛṣṇadeva an advocate of the orthodox faction of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school also fashioned works to discourage the non-orthodox practices widespread in the domain. He eagerly seized the opportunity to collaborate with Jaisingh to support his ambitions to fashion an orthodox Vaiṣṇavism. This served both parties well, as the mainstream Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy desired to eliminate the fractious entities within their communities, and Jaisingh also could not allow unorthodox practices to operate unnoticed within his domain. Considering the state deity's connection to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect he could not permit them especially to fall outside the precinct of orthodox Vaiṣṇavism. Jaisingh therefore labored

¹²³ Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p.105

¹²⁴ Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p.106

¹²⁵ The tradition describes Rūpa Gosvāmī's eternal form as Rādhā's maidservant in Vraja in his perfected form.

For instance, Kavi-karṇapūra's *gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* (108): śrī-rūpa-mañjarī famous earlier in Vṛndāvāna, at present has manifested as rūpa gosvāmī (śrī-rūpa-mañjarī khyātā yāsīd vṛndāvane purā | sādya rūpākhyā-gosvāmī bhūtvā prakāṣatām iyāt ||)

alongside *brahmin* scholars such as Kṛṣṇadeva Bhaṭṭācārya, stimulating discussions and debates on this subject at the courts and assemblies. The outcomes of which included obligatory reforms and several critical treatises representing the results of arduous negotiations which were eventually deposited as authoritative texts in the city palace library.

This enduring political-religious climate led to the production of specialized works commissioned by the king such as four vital compositions by Kṛṣṇadeva in this era, the *Bhakti-vivṛti*, the *Jñāna-vivṛti*, the *Karma-vivṛti* and the *Siddhānta-prakaśikya*. Kṛṣṇadeva Bhaṭṭācārya's *Karma-vivṛti*, along with a work known as the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, also instigated by Jaisingh are located in the city palace library. These textual compilations emerged in response to the mandate of providing theological rationalizations endorsing orthodox forms of conduct. These works feature overlapping themes and therefore appear to have been compiled in collaboration. These two-specialized works will be the subject of the forthcoming chapters, having materialized from the debates regarding the significance of frameworks of social engagement based on *karma* and *varṇāśrama* to be assimilated by Vaiṣṇava sects. These two compositions reason emphatically for the endorsement of practices such as *karma* and *varṇāśrama*, proposing arguments and rationalizations sculpted from the canonical works and authoritative commentaries of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. Furthermore, although the authors refrain from polemical statements and do not mention the individuals and groups they were targeting, it is evident that the themes raised and addressed in these texts were not configured in isolation, but were instead a consequence of the enduring debates. These works traverse numerous contentious subjects such as the compatibility of *karma* and *bhakti*, and the extent of the authority of prescribed *karma* for a *bhakti* practitioner, neither of these topics had been rigidly nor rigorously defined by earlier teachers of the tradition. Another critical feature examined pertains to the concept of public engagement and responsibility for the greater public good, in other words to uphold ideal standards of conduct in order to benefit the wider society. Thus, in multiple ways these works stress the harmony between *bhakti* and *karma* practices and encourage *bhakti* practitioners to engage in the public arena responsibly substantiating their views by referring to key passages from the foremost Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava authorities.

Redefining the significance and place of *karma* or orthodox conduct within *bhakti* traditions was not confined to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, but was also required to be tackled by other Vaiṣṇava groups seeking political legitimization. For instance, Monika Horstmann examined a composition in the same period from Bālakṛṣṇa Bhaṭṭa, known as the *Prameya-ratnārṇava*, which is a theological piece reasoning for orthodox practices and conduct according to the Puṣṭi

mārga tradition.¹²⁶ The work wrestles with comparable themes and matters to those highlighted by Kṛṣṇadeva in the *Karma-vivṛti* which indicates that this was a prominent issue in this era that necessitated responses from the sects that desired legitimisation. Indeed, the *Prameya-ratnārṇava* appears to have been compiled as a direct reply to both the king's and Kṛṣṇadeva's positions on the role of *karma* within *bhakti* practice. The king who was striving for unity amongst the sects, encouraged sects to present topics of political-religious significance in light of other presentations, particularly those of key figures at the court such as Kṛṣṇadeva Bhaṭṭācārya to stress commonalities rather than differences in these crucial matters. The case of this collaboration between the Puṣṭi *mārga* and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect is also remarkable as it is well documented that there were conflicts between the two schools later in their histories.

Jaisingh's era was marked by a conflict over *bhakti* and *karma*, *bhakti's* transcendent traits encouraged parties to forsake responsibilities to the worldly realm. This theological presentation gave rise to non-orthodox practices and factions. As well as being a source of schisms within sects, it also attracted political pressure from a king who was keen on reforms that fostered orthodox practices. The case of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect was one of the most significant, in light of their prominent positions in both Vṛndavāna and Jaipur, both domains governed by Jaisingh. Consequently, with the rise of unorthodox practices and the subsequent social disorder provoked by the likes of Rūpa Kavirāja, the orthodox faction of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect had to distance themselves from such non-orthodox trends and display that their positions were in sync with Jaisingh's reform efforts. There were several reactions to the rising non-orthodox modes of living, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition responded internally via leading Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teacher Viśvanātha Cakravartī who endeavored to illustrate the intricacies of *rāgānuga-bhakti*, in contrast to interpretations that would rouse social disorder. The king also strived to curb such practices by employing several scholars, to debate and discuss these issues. On behalf of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scholars, Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya became a key consultant to the king and pioneered the conception of new works and partook in prohibiting unorthodox works such as those of Rūpa Kavirāja to tackle the dangerous trend of unorthodox Vaiṣṇava factions.

¹²⁶ Monika Horstmann, "Theology and statecraft", in Margaret H. Case Ed., *Religious cultures in Early Modern India*, (London 2012) p.57

Conclusion

Savai Jaisingh II's governance was marked by his efforts to induce religious reforms¹²⁷ by hosting numerous public religious debates and discussions in his courts. *Brahmins* and scholars had been recruited to mediate and participate in such forums. They strived to devise a bridge between governance and *dharma*, subsequently the underpinnings of Jaisingh's status and sovereignty attained religious legitimacy. Jaisingh convened various conferences to resolve the religious issues of the day and actively interacted with the theologians commissioned to obtain clarification and resolutions on matters of concern. These endeavours culminated in the establishment of universal norms and codes of behaviour, and resulted in theological expositions to discipline and control the various religious sects within the realm. Although, the establishment of Jaipur was revolutionary as the Kachvāhās had not engaged in such an extensive venture to marry political power and *dharma*, exhibited by the ambitious religious projects instigated by the king and his enrolment of numerous *brahmins*. Nevertheless, Jaipur was not a unique case and resembled the trends witnessed in the Maratha and Orcha courts.¹²⁸

Many of the *brahmins* were not coerced into engaging in the king's undertakings, indeed, many of the *brahmins* were keen to accept the opportunity granted by the king, as it would lead to an enhanced status and to remuneration in the form of grants and land for them and their temples. There were several matters of concern in this era for this religiously captivated king, subsequently they also became significant to the *brahmins* in his court. For instance, the promotion of orthodox practices within sects was deemed crucial to attaining the king's endorsement, thus the king compelled sects within his domain to embrace universal modes of

¹²⁷ As well as the reformation attempts induced upon Vaiṣṇava sects within his realm, Jaisingh II also actively petitioned on behalf of the Hindu populace. For instance, he utilized the political influence garnered in the Mughal courts to eradicate the *jizya* tax upon non-Muslim members of the empire. He accomplished this by persuading Muhammad Shah in 1720 to remove the tax, in addition, he was able to remove the tax inflicted on pilgrims to Gaya in 1728, and furthermore in 1730 he requested the emperor to remove the tax imposed on the Hindus who bathed in certain holy places. (Entwistle, *Braj Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage*, p.190) Upon his request, the tax on *Bhadar*, a ritual among the Hindus when an elder member of the family died, was also eradicated. (Okita, *Hindu theology*, p.32) These examples provide an insight into how through his endeavors, he protected the Hindu populace in the Mughal empire from Hindu centric taxes that were deemed to be unjust.

¹²⁸ Horstmann, "Theology and statecraft", p.66

conduct. The *brahmins* were expected to provide theological reasoning for such orthodox practices and modes of conduct recommended by the king, subsequently providing religious legitimacy for demanding such manners of living. In general, the king's ambitions were to fashion systems that transcended the idiosyncratic traits of various sects, exhibited by their individual and exclusive practices, and to instead establish a broad orthodox mode of living based on Vaiṣṇava theology that could be accommodated by the multiple groups that existed within his domain. The orthodox *brahmins* who were associated with these sects were now employed at the courts and became central to his *dharma* driven projects, and those *brahmins* or sects that did not cooperate with the king's ambitions were either banned or declined imperial support.

The reign of Jaisingh witnessed the influx of Vaiṣṇava deities in Jaipur and wider Rajasthan, which resulted in a shift in the powerbases of religious sects in North India. As a consequence, religious competition increased and appeasing the king became vital for the survival and prosperity of sects. Thus, sects moved into an intensely political world and could no longer ignore negotiating with the political powers. They had to legitimate a Vaiṣṇava king and support his efforts of statecraft directed by *dharmic* principles. Consequently, the contributions from the *brahmins* in the courts of Jaipur also had a political function. Therefore, many texts were born in such contexts, and should not be mistaken to have been works fashioned remotely, but were rather the products of numerous discussions and debates convened in the Jaipur courts. The majority of these compositions commissioned by the king, were deposited in the city palace library as reference works for the political-religious issues and were utilized as instruments to instigate religious standards. Thus, these critical pieces served as timely products during a period of mounting political pressure upon religious sects.

Despite the extraneous reform efforts instigated by the political powers in collaboration with the employed theologians, during this period of transition, the stipulations broadcast as a consequence of the dialogues did not always attain universal acceptance. Consequently, Vaiṣṇava factions impelled by the esoteric practices of the *bhakti* path clashed with the orthodox requirements being institutionalized widely. The case of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect was significant in this period. The king was the benefactor for a broad spectrum of religious groups, however his dedication to Govindadeva was celebrated and subsequently he is known to have favored the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school especially. Ever since Kachvāhā ruler Bihari Mal's reign, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school had enjoyed a privileged position with the Kachvāhā monarchs however it had never been arbitrated rigidly. However, with Govindadeva migrating to Jaipur and the emergence of Jaisingh, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect were obliged to react to the elaborate reformation demands permeating this new environment. Furthermore, other competing groups contested

the favor exhibited by the king for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect and the state deity of Govindadeva.

In this era, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community encountered a variety of trials and tribulations, from pressure over their positions on the *svakīyā* doctrine and *parakīyā* doctrine to countering schisms generated by the followers of Rūpa Kavirāja to complying with the imperial mandate to conform to the universal modes of conduct established. Such controversies and pressures forced the mainstream orthodox faction of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava faction to define itself through novel textual contributions expanding on specific areas of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect's emphasis on the *parakīyā-vāda* was judged to be contentious and a rupture to the propagation of orthodoxy in the realm. In the case of Rūpa Kavirāja, his followers interpreted the theological teachings of Rūpa Gosvāmī to a conclusion that was divisive, which both the orthodox Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava faction as well as the king were unwilling to accommodate. His ideology became the rationalization for practices that sparked social disruptions, his followers derived support from his teachings for the practice of dressing as *gopīs* and illicit behavior which became rampant in Jaisingh's domains. Viśvanātha Cakravartī who opposed the elevation of *svakīyā-vāda* over *parakīyā-vāda*, which appeared to conflict with the wishes of the king, was in agreement with the king on this matter however. Viśvanātha Cakravartī presented clarifications on *rāgānugā-bhakti* practice that facilitated a conduct that was socially permissible in Jaisingh's domains. The controversy culminated in the Jaipur courts issuing a ban on Rūpa Kavirāja's works, Kṛṣṇadeva Bhaṭṭācārya on behalf of the king became an integral participant in the debates that concluded in this verdict. This phase also witnessed the production of works such as the *Karma-vivṛti* and *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, which were the outcomes of discussions and debates emerging from the escalating non-orthodox practices.

The case of Rūpa Kavirāja was just one out of numerous cases that had to be addressed as Jaisingh reconfigured religious power and behavior in North India. These politically inspired endeavours have in common that they shift away from a *bhakti* practice that inspires spontaneous and unorthodox practices and try to come to terms with the rising mandate that even the highest stage of *bhakti* must be integrated into a form that adheres to orthodox prescriptions and stimulates social responsibility. The parallel themes emerging and recurring in the writings inspired by Jaisingh, witnessed in Kṛṣṇadeva's works and others such as Puṣṭi *mārga* leader Balakṛṣṇa imply that the matter of fusing orthodox *dharma* to *bhakti* was one that engrossed the *brahmins* connected to the royal courts, compelled by a king who was fostering a persona of a *dharmic* Hindu king akin to age-old renowned Hindu kings of yore.

In this era of Indian history, religion was very much embedded within social structure and culture, appearing to revolve mainly around the traditional *varṇāśrama* system and consequently

differs from the circumstances in the later, colonial era. In this traditional system, different areas of social life such as politics, law, kinship, economics and religion are not distinguished from the totality of arrangements of a society but together remained rooted in the system. The traditional system permits the coexistence of a social reality with a transcendent objective, binding the two dimensions. We therefore find Jaisingh, a figure of political status yet religious inclinations, arguably weaving a tapestry of public theology with the threads of scripture, tradition, and worldly duty. I will further examine the precise theological and philosophical response to Jaisingh's religious aspirations from the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school in this era in the forthcoming chapters.

CHAPTER 3 - Karma-Vivṛti - Exposition on Karma

Introduction

Due to the substantial political pressures encountered during the era of Jaisingh II, various Vaiṣṇava sects were forced to reexamine their relations with practices such as *karma* and *varṇāśrama*. They were expected to assign importance to public responsibility, consequently they were compelled to reconfigure their theological positions to satisfy the stipulations of the king, Jaisingh II. In other words, they had to present their *bhakti* practices in light of the conservative and orthodox guidelines instilled by the king. As a result, several works were produced by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition which attempted to respond to the pressures. The first text that I will explore in this regard is the *Karma-vivṛti* of Kṛṣṇadeva Sarvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya. However, before we embark on an examination of this text which elucidates upon *karma-bhakti* relations, I will take a brief look at the precise nature of *karma* in this period and then proceed to evaluate why incorporating and accommodating *karma* may have posed a problem for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect.

Definitions

Nature of *dharmā*, *varṇāśrama* and *karma* in Jaisingh's era

Before analyzing the role of *karma* within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, it's important to briefly explore what *karma* may translate to in the context of Jaisingh's reign. This will also entail exploring terms such as *dharmā* and *varṇāśrama* which are all interconnected and will appear in the course of the key discussions in this chapter. I will begin by exploring the concept of *dharmā*¹. In the framework of Jaisingh's reign, an important aspect of an individual's *dharmic* responsibilities is governed by the rules pertaining to one's *varṇa* or social class and *āśrama* or order of life. This is often commonly known as one's *sva-dharma* which is based on a person's

¹ Dharma is a term that's notoriously difficult to define, its Sanskrit root *dhr*, 'to hold' or 'to support' provides some indication of its meaning. It is also taken to mean a wide spectrum of meanings such as law, universal order or religion in general, thus according to the context whether historical or religious, a specific meaning may dominate. However, regardless of which meaning is used according to the setting it is assumed that the other definitions are implicitly included. (Ingo Strauch, "Dharma", in Knut A.Jacobsen Ed., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, (Boston, 2010), p.736)

age, gender, social position, marital status, order of life and so on. This contrasts the rules that govern all members of society known as *sādhāraṇa-dharma* or *sāmānya-dharma*, 'common' or 'general' rules of behavior², such values are described in BP 7.11.8-12, which illustrates the general principles to be followed by all such as mercy, truthfulness, penance and cleanliness. Thus, the following of *dharma* within this social system tries to draw a balance between codes of conduct for all and specific requirements pertaining to one's *varṇa* and *āśrama*. The *varṇāśrama* system divides society into four major *varṇas*, namely the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*. It is also a system that provides religious legitimization for one's social position, the importance of which for Jaisingh II entailed the preservation of a social order with a hierarchical arrangement with the king at the top alongside the *brāhmaṇas*. The notion of *dharma* therefore, navigated several areas such as social duties, values and religion. Thus, a multi-semantic concept of *dharma* took shape.

The concept of *dharma* is closely related to *karma*,³ specifically that of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. In this period, one's prescribed *karma* was primarily determined by one's *varṇa* and *āśrama*. However, historically the concept of *karma* has conveyed different ideas in different ages. The concept of *karma* pervades most *Sanskrit* texts including the *Samhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇās* and the Epics. The concept is also a fundamental idea in Jain and Buddhist teachings. The term takes on various meanings according to the text. In the Vedic texts, the *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas*, the term *karma* came to denote a ritual or sacrificial or liturgical rite, often equated with the term *īṣṭapūrta*. In these texts, by the practice of *karma* one would attain heaven upon rebirth. Yuvaraj Krishan states that the word *karman* occurs about forty times in the *Ṛg Veda*, he also provides specific instances where sacrifice is equated to *karma*,⁴ for instance, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* I.1.2.1 describes sacrifice as *karma*,⁵ furthermore, I.7.1.5 sacrifice is known as the greatest of works.⁶ These Vedic texts provided the roots from which the doctrine of *karma* evolved. In the *Upaniṣads* the term *karman* or *karma* is also used as in the *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas* as signifying ritual actions. However, the underlying doctrine of *karma* is ultimately portrayed differently in *Vedāntic* texts such as the *Brahma-sūtras* and the *Upaniṣads*. Indeed,

² Ingo Strauch, "Dharma", p.737

³ The stem of the noun is *karman* and *karma* is the nominative singular form. The term is derived from the Sanskrit verb *kṛ* which means "to do, to make, perform, cause, undertake", in other words it denotes an action.

⁴ Krishan, Y. *The doctrine of Karma*, (Delhi, 1997), p.4

⁵ *yajña vai karma*

⁶ *yajña vai śreṣṭhatamam karma*

karma is frequently portrayed in the *Upaniṣads* as binding, temporary and futile. Therefore, as we trace the development of the doctrine of *karma*, we witness a caution over the practice of *karma*, even 'good' actions, as they are all essentially considered as impediments to liberation. Likewise, the Buddhist and Jains also claimed that ritualistic *karma* was a hindrance to emancipation.

In contrast, to the prevalent condemnation of *karma*, the *Pūrva mīmāṃsakas* with the innovation of *nitya* and *naimittika karma* categories rejuvenated ritualistic practices promoting *karmas* as compulsory acts.⁷ The *Pūrva mīmāṃsakas* propagated four categories of religious *karmas*: *nitya*, *naimittika*, *kāmya*, *niṣiddha*.⁸ Furthermore, the *Pūrva mīmāṃsakas* maintained that *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kāmya* acts are prescribed by the Vedas and are therefore *dharma* or *vaidika karma*, Vedic acts. Indeed, many schools asserted that both *nitya* and *naimittika* acts were deemed to be mandatory being Vedic injunctions and only *kāmya-karma* was considered optional as such pursuits were performed to achieve materialistic objectives such as entrance into the heavenly realms. One's position in the *varṇāśrama* system defined one's obligations to specific *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* to be performed, for example non-householders or those who were not in the *grhastra āśrama* were under no obligation to execute the *pañca-mahā-yajñas* (five great sacrifices). Such *varṇāśrama* orientated responsibilities were outlined in texts like the *Manu-smṛti*.⁹

The doctrine of *karma* and rebirth can also be observed in the *Purāṇās* and Epics, described primarily through stories and histories. In texts like the *Mahābhārata*, however, the practice of *karma* expands and is no longer limited to only sacrificial acts, but refers to all action whether mental or physical.¹⁰ Furthermore, such texts promote a notion of action that enables one to live in this world performing one's duties of *karma* without becoming entangled, under the condition that actions are offered selflessly to the Supreme (*niṣkāma-karma*). This eliminates

⁷ Krishan, *The doctrine of Karma*, p.167

⁸ The first, *nitya-karma* means a constant or continual act such as the execution of the *pañca-mahā-yajñas* (five great sacrifices) or any daily rite such as the *agni-hotra*. On the other hand, *naimittika-karma* denotes an occasional act or special act to be performed such as *samskāras*, birth ceremony, marriage, *śraddha* ceremony and so on. The third type of act, *kāmya-karma* means optional or dispensable acts, inspired by desires to fulfil some material ambition. And finally, *niṣiddha-karma* implies forbidden acts described in scriptures and those acts that run counter to established social norms such as theft, killing brahmins and so on.

⁹ Krishan, *The doctrine of Karma*, p.160

¹⁰ Julius Lipner, "Karman", in Knut A.Jacobsen Ed., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, (Boston, 2010), p.781

the possible negative effects of *karma*. It is also observed that Epics such as the *Rāmāyana* and *Māhābharata* illustrate in detail the nature of desired acts within a social context defined by *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Hence these works played a vital role in exemplifying how *karma* should be enacted. Indeed, it is interesting to consider that there are several compilations related to Rāma,¹¹ who is regularly referred to as the archetype king, ascribed to Jaisingh. Similarly, Jaisingh was also likened to the great figure from the *Māhābharata*, king Yudhiṣṭhira, also known as *dharmarāja*, the king of *dharma*. Jaisingh's passion for the performance of rituals is also well-known, consequently *brahmins* such as Rātnakara Bhaṭṭa were employed to execute Vedic rituals such as the *Vājapeya Yajña*. Rātnakara also composed a work known as the '*Jayasimha-Kalpadruma*' on the *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* executed by Jaisingh, who performed them throughout his life. There were also numerous ritual literatures commissioned by him as listed by Bahura.¹² Thus, notions of ideal and positive *karma* were derived and inspired from such texts, and were the pinnacle to constructing a state such as Jaipur grounded on the tenets of *dharma*.

Is the practice of *karma* problematic for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition?

Numerous examples of the problem of *karma* for the tradition

For the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school the ultimate goal of all practice and philosophical pursuance surpasses the traditional aims of religion, wealth, pleasure and liberation in favor of a fifth final goal which is to nurture unconditional and spontaneous *prema* or love for their supreme deity, Kṛṣṇa. Any effort or endeavor that does not serve in attaining this goal is discarded and avoided. Indeed, devotion or *bhakti* is not only the ultimate goal, in other words, the highest stage of *bhakti*, *prema-bhakti*, but is also the means known as *sādhana-bhakti*. Nevertheless, the tradition acknowledges two other authentic *yoga* paths: *karma* and *jñāna*. Therefore, considering the sole method and objective is *bhakti*, what role, if any, does the practice of *karma* have?¹³ And therefore what is the necessity of social duties defined by the *varṇāśrama* system pertaining to *karma* for a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practitioner?

¹¹ These compilations are also symptomatic of his devotion to Rāma in his early life. (Gopal Narayan Bahura, *Literary Heritage of the Rulers of Amber and Jaipur*, (Jaipur, 1976), p.62)

¹² Bahura, *Literary Heritage of the Rulers of Amber and Jaipur*, p.60

¹³ The role of *jñāna* within the Caitanya tradition has been explored by authors: (Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta of Jīva Gosvāmī*) & (Okita, *Hindu theology in early modern South Asia*)

As we examine the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition's relationship with *karma* what becomes explicitly clear is that although the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition does not go so far as to reject the practice of *karma* overtly, it does nevertheless caution *bhakti* practitioners over engagement in *karma*. A general aversion towards engaging in worldly roles due to fear of entanglement appears to be a prevalent feature of the tradition. Such troubles are evident even within the popular definition of *bhakti*. In the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.11, Rūpa Gosvāmī, the leading teacher of the tradition, defines the highest devotion as follows: 'The highest devotion is continuous and devoted service to Kṛṣṇa performed in a favorable way. It is free of all other desires and unobscured by knowledge or activity.'¹⁴ This definition functions as the 'root verse' from which the various features of *bhakti* are drawn. In this definition, a serious caution against the performance of *karma* is shared by Rūpa Gosvāmī.

Jīva Gosvāmī, the celebrated successor to Rūpa Gosvāmī and the tradition's most prolific author, clarifies in regard to this verse, the nature of action to be cautious over. He states: 'Here, ritual action refers to the *nitya* and *naimittika* acts as revealed in the *smṛtis* and other texts, but not to acts used in worship of Kṛṣṇa, because this entails continuous service to him.'¹⁵ Therefore, it is clear from Jīva's comments that the nature of *karma* that is discouraged is that delineated by the *varṇāśrama* system.

According to Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, even Caitanya the initiator of the tradition appears to relegate the importance of *karma*. In his well-known conversation with Rāmānanda Rāya in South India, Caitanya asks Rāmānanda Rāya to explain the ultimate goal of life, using evidence from the scriptures. In the initial stages of this conversation Rāmānanda first proposed, as the ultimate goal, *varṇāśrama* or the observance of the four social and four spiritual orders of life and executing one's duties in accordance with this principle. However, Caitanya retorted that this proposition was superficial,¹⁶ in other words external, for *varṇāśrama* pertains to bodily concerns and not the ultimate self, and consequently he requested Rāmānanda for further propositions. Recognizing this, Rāmānanda increasingly proposed other possibilities, one after another, so that by the end of the dialogue the full gamut of wisdom is traversed and the various paths leading to the ultimate goal are explored. The exchange takes them from the notion of merely executing *varṇāśrama* duties to offering one's *karmas* to Kṛṣṇa to relinquishing one's *karmas* completely;

¹⁴ anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyaṃ jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānūśīlanam bhaktir uttamā

¹⁵ karma cātra smṛty-ādy-uktaṃ nitya-naimittikādi na tu bhajanīya-paricaryyādi tasya tad-anūśīlana-rūpatvāt

¹⁶ (CC 2.8.54-55) p.434-435

from there the conversation progresses to *bhakti* mixed with knowledge to pure devotion without any adulteration (*prema-bhakti*), and the highest example of *bhakti* which is expressed by *Rādhā*.¹⁷ This analysis demonstrates emphatically that *karma* scores very low on the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava hierarchy of importance.

Another example from Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's biography of Caitanya, further illustrates the reluctance of the founder of the tradition to combine *bhakti* with *karma*. Upon Caitanya's travels in South India, he encounter's the Mādhva renunciates in Udupi. The Mādhva school's emphasis on *karma* made it an object of criticism from Caitanya. He begins his exchange with them by asking them to describe the means to perfection to which they respond, 'The *varṇāśrama-dharma* and presenting [oneself] to Kṛṣṇa: these are the best *sādhana*s of the Kṛṣṇa-*bhakta*. Gaining the five kinds of *mukti* and going to Vaikuṅṭha, this is the ultimate *sādhya*, and the *śāstras* attest it.'¹⁸ Caitanya strongly rejected this claim, and in his refutation states "The *śāstras* say 'listening to *kīrtana*', and that Kṛṣṇa-*prema* as a result of service is the highest *sādhana*. For *prema* comes to Kṛṣṇa from *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*: and that is the highest end of man, the limits of the goals of men."¹⁹ Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja also refers to BP 7.5.23-24, these two verses outline the key nine practices of *bhakti* which includes the practice of hearing and chanting to further substantiate Caitanya's claim. Caitanya further states: 'The abandonment of *karma* and the vilification of *karma* – this the *śāstras* attest; there is never any *prema-bhakti* of Kṛṣṇa from *karma*'.²⁰ He quotes BP 11.11.32 and BG 18.66 and BP 11.20.9 to further substantiate his position.²¹ In response, the Mādhva renunciate agrees, however provides alternative reasons for giving importance to *varṇāśrama*.²² Now, whether or not the reproach dispensed is acceptable is not of primary interest for our purposes.²³ The principal concern here is the attitude towards *karma* and its relationship to *bhakti* in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. The founder of the tradition here explicitly demotes *karma* and its role in achieving the highest goal, *prema-bhakti*.

Another core text for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school is the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. The *Purāṇa*'s own account of its origin provides further insight into the problem of *karma*. It is stated that

¹⁷ (CC 2.8.54-75) p.434-440

¹⁸ (CC 2.9.238-239) p.475-476

¹⁹ (CC 2.9.240-241) p.476

²⁰ (CC 2.9.242) p.476

²¹ (CC 2.9.242 – śloka 21-23) p.476-477

²² (CC 2.9.247-248) p.477

²³ BNK Sharma, an important scholar on the Mādhva school, criticizes the Caitanya-caritāmṛta for misrepresenting and misunderstanding the actual position of Mādhva. (B.N.K. Sharma, *History of the Dvaita school of Vedānta and its literature*, (Delhi, 2000), p.526)

Vyāsa, despite having compiled many sacred texts particularly the great Epic *Mahābhārata*, remained very despondent. In this state, his teacher Nārada Muni arrived at his hermitage on the bank of the River Sarasvatī. Upon seeing Nārada, Vyāsa offered all due respects to his teacher. Nārada then began to address his student and responded to his despondency. BP 1.5.2 Nārada asked, ‘O greatly fortunate one, son of Parāśara (Vyāsa), are you pleased by identifying the self with the body or the mind?’²⁴ Nārada clarified that despite his efforts to compose literatures of sacred content for the benefit of others, Vyāsa had mistakenly identified the body and mind with the ontological self. Furthermore, in BP 1.5.8 Nārada added, ‘You have not praised the pure glories of the Supreme. Anything that does not please the Supreme is considered a defective philosophy.’²⁵ This was Nārada’s diagnosis of Vyāsadeva’s predicament, and therefore despite compiling so many works he had not given enough time to glorify the Supreme and instead gave more attention to that which pertains to the world. Vyāsa’s objective had been to regulate and discipline people’s worldly activities or *karma* so that they could gradually come to the spiritual plane. However, Nārada explains in this passage that such instructions would instead fan worldly desires, detracting people from pursuing self-realization. Considering Nārada’s assessment, we can further appreciate the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition’s aversion to *karma* and their concerns that such activities can detract the practitioner from *bhakti*, the ultimate aspiration. This is reflected in Vyāsa’s novel compilation in response to Nārada’s criticisms, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which states from the very beginning in BP 1.1.2 ‘Here, the highest *dharma* completely rejects deceit, which is understandable by those devotees who are without envy...’²⁶.

Another important concern is that in contrast to *karma*, qualifying for *bhakti* doesn’t stipulate restrictions related to birth or caste. Providing significance to *karma* would result in importance laid upon such restrictions possibly curbing the broad reach and appeal of *bhakti*. For example, in BG 9.32 and BP 2.7.46 it is explained regardless of worldly status one can take to the path of *bhakti* and attain perfection, *varṇāśrama* in comparison depends on worldly qualifications to position people appropriately in society. Therefore, the teachings of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school appear to neglect the importance of apparent *karma*-based identities governed by one’s birth, occupation, gender and so on. Indeed, in light of salvation one’s position in the world, whether grand or meek according to social order is to be considered

²⁴ nārada uvāca, pārāśarya mahā-bhāga bhavataḥ kaccid ātmanā parituṣyati śārīra ātmā mānasa eva vā

²⁵ nārada uvāca, bhavatānudita-prāyaṁ yaśobhagavato ’malam yenaivāsau na tuṣyeta manye tad darśanaṁ khilam

²⁶ dharmah projjhita-kaitavo ’tra paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām vedyam...

ultimately insignificant. Such self-conceptions are considered to be *abhimānas*, erroneous notions of self-image, fundamentally different to one’s true self. Consequently, the conviction that a person’s self-understanding or ‘identity’ can be changed suggests similarly that one’s social position also fundamentally changes. This lies in opposition to the more traditional view that one’s social position and occupational role is determined by one’s *karma*, which cannot be eradicated in this life. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, in contrast believe that *karma* can be removed by the benevolent grace of Kṛṣṇa, and therefore someone of low socio-cultural status for instance, by the practice of *bhakti*, would achieve an elevated social standing deserving of increased respect. Considering the difference between the rigid traditional notions of *varṇāśrama* and the more malleable path of *bhakti* practice, such tensions inevitably presented a challenge for a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practitioner in attempting to accommodate the principles pertaining to *karma*.

Returning to the foremost teachers of the tradition, Sanātana Gosvāmī’s comments on one of the seed verses of the *Gītā*, BG 18.66 further highlights the view that actual surrender or pure *bhakti* entails the complete abandonment of *karma*. Sanātana writes as such in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 10.63 while commenting on BG 18.66. The author suggests that *bhakti* culminates in the complete abandonment of *karma*, whether daily or occasional rituals and to consequently take complete refuge of Kṛṣṇa alone. Indeed, if one does this, one needs not worry about incurring sin.²⁷ However, this interpretation differs from Śrī Vaiṣṇava commentaries such as Rāmānuja, who sought to continue *dharmas* even within the scope of *bhakti* and *prapatti*. For example, Rāmānuja states in his commentary to BG 18.66 that ‘All *dharmas* means *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti yogas* which are the means for attaining the highest good, by offering them as worship with great affection according to eligibility only act. One should abandon the notion of agency, results of actions and so on.’²⁸ So in Rāmānuja’s interpretation, *karma* is not to be abandoned but

²⁷ sarvān nitya-naimittikādi-karma-lakṣaṇān parityajya sarvarthā tyaktvā mām ekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja mad-eka-niṣṭho bhavety arthaḥ | yadvā śaraṇāgatavamātreṇāpi mām ekaṃ āśraya kim utaikāntitvena nanu vihitākaraṇena pāpaṃ syāt tatrāha sarvebhyo vihitākaraṇajebhyaḥ kathañcin niṣiddhācaraṇajebhyaś ca tathā saṃsāra-duḥkha-kāraṇa-karma-rūpebhyaḥ tad-vāsanādi-rūpebhyo ’pi pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmīti | ataḥ mā śucaḥ | (Johnathan B Edelman, “The Antinomian Devotee”, American Oriental Society, Conference Paper, March 2015, p.3)

²⁸ karma-yoga-jñāna-yoga-bhakti-yoga-rūpān sarvān dharmān parama-niśreyasa-sādhana-bhūtān, mad-ārādhanaatvena atimātra-prītyā yathādhikāraṃ kurvāṇa eva, ukta-rītyā phala-karma-karṭṛtvādi-parityāgena parityajya (Svami Adidevananda, *Sri Rāmānuja Gītā Bhāṣya*, (Mylapore, 2007), p.598)

rather the sense of agency and results, whereas in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition it appears that *karma* itself is required to be completely abandoned.

Therefore, so far, we have witnessed numerous examples from foundational scriptures and teachers of the tradition endorsing the abandonment of *karma* in pursuance of *bhakti*. Specifically, *karma* appears to be a problem as it is often associated with worldly enjoyment, binds one to the world and often the outcome of such a practice is the attainment of heavens, which is the ultimate form of material enjoyment. The aspiration for such goals conflicts with the ultimate purpose of a *bhakti* practitioner. We may recall that pure *bhakti* was defined as ‘free from the desire for anything other than Kṛṣṇa’. For devotion to be pure and paramount, as described in the definitions, one has to be free from desires for enjoyment in this world which is expressed frequently through the religious paths of ritual action or *karma*. Thus, the *bhakta* hopes to renounce the desire for such goals to properly dedicate himself to devotion, because they are incompatible with it. ‘As long as the fiend of longing for enjoyment or liberation resides in the heart, how can the joy of devotion arise there? Rūpa asks. Or as Jīva puts it, ‘how can one travelling east obtain an object moving west?’.²⁹ Now if the abandonment of social norms pertaining to the *varṇāśrama* system, norms that had served as the primary source for orthodox Hindu communities for centuries, was to be swiftly abandoned in a nonchalant manner with the adoption of *bhakti*, one can appreciate how such a view might concern those in political power who were responsible for social cohesion and governance.

It is also worth highlighting that despite the early prolific authorship within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, it had not produced a single text to address the theological basis for engaging within public or social systems governed by *varṇāśrama*, nor any significant passages offering guidance or insight into how a practitioner might behave or integrate into such environments. Nor have they produced commentaries upon or in any substantial way referred to politically orientated or *karma* driven texts such as the *Dharma śāstras*. The tradition’s most prominent texts relate instead to commentaries on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, biographies of Caitanya, and philosophical expositions on a range of topics and themes such as *rasa*, none of which apply themselves categorically to the subject of public or social theology in relation to *varṇāśrama*.

²⁹ Rembert Lutjeharms, *Aesthetics*, in Ravi Gupta Ed. *Caitanya Vaiṣṇava philosophy*, (London, 2007), p.196

Attempts to connect *karma* to *bhakti*

Karma-vivṛti, Karmādhikāra-nirṇayaḥ, Bhagavad-Gīta commentaries

Despite this dearth of scholarship on the precise role of *karma* and by extension the social responsibilities concerning a *bhakti* practitioner in the early phase of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition suddenly in the mid-eighteenth century a wave of texts appear striving to construct a bridge between *bhakti* and *karma*. As outlined in the previous chapter the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition enter into a dialogue with king Jaisingh II of the Kachvāhā dynasty who was concerned with the importance of various schools endorsing public engagement pertaining to *varṇāśrama* and *karma*. Some Vaiṣṇava groups during this period considered the ascent of rituals and *karma* to be the concern of other groups, in contrast to their own exclusive absorption in devotion. However, with the mounting political pressures in Jaipur, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, required to respond to such matters and therefore we observe a literary trend emerge within the tradition attempting to balance the tension between orthodox practices and a transcendent religion of love apparently opposed to the norms promoted. Thus, we observe a concerted attempt by the tradition within this period to theologically endorse the role of *karma* in the life of a *bhakta*. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition was not unique in this regard, and in fact a number of groups such as the Puṣṭi *mārga* began analysing their sects' relations with *varṇāśrama*, sometimes accusing one another of orthodoxical inadequacies to promote themselves in favour of the king.

Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, the king's chief pandit and a renowned Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava argued strongly for the compatibility of *karma* and *bhakti*. Kṛṣṇadeva was a prominent leader for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and had become an advisor of the king of Jaipur by the year 1715³⁰. At the behest of the king, Kṛṣṇadeva wrote texts on three paths known as the *Karma-vivṛti*, the *Jñāna-vivṛti* and the *Bhakti-vivṛti*. He attempted to create a theological system that held the tensions between these three systems in balance, at times even pushing the previous boundaries set by the tradition. In the *Karma-vivṛti*³¹, he argues that, 'A certain action is favorable (*sāṃmukhya*) because it is ordered by the lord and offered to the lord. Similarly, an action is unfavorable (*asāṃmukhya*) to the lord when these characteristics are absent.'³². He further

³⁰ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.68

³¹ The *Karma-vivṛti* that I refer to and translate is derived from an edited Sanskrit manuscript from Monika Horstmann's German book *Der Zusammenhalt der Welt* (p.218-290), originally sourced from the Man Singh Museum in the City Palace of Jaipur.

³² *karmaṇo bhagavat-sāmmukhyatvaṃ ca tad-ājñāpālana-rūpatvena tad-arpitatvādinā ca karaṇāt, tad-asāmmukhya-rūpatvaṃ ca tad-abhāvāt* (Monika Horstmann, p.220)

explains that criticism is heard of in regard to acts that are unfavourable (*asāṃmukhya*)³³ and in fact, '(Sammukhya) is directly *bhakti*, and a means to attain pure devotion (*śuddha-bhakti*), and proceeding which is a means to attain intense devotion (*bhāva-bhakti*).'³⁴ He further explains offering *karma* is a gateway for *jñāna* and *bhakti*.³⁵ Kṛṣṇadeva, thus argues that *karma*, when performed as an offering to Kṛṣṇa, leads to the highest forms of *bhakti*. Following suit, Jaisingh II, himself a devotee of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava deity *Govindadeva* also instigated the compilation of a text known as the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, which is an exposition on who is eligible to perform *karma*. In a similar vein, *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* promotes the compatibility of *karma* and *bhakti*, the text invokes two critical verses that emphasize the importance of following the rules pertaining to *varṇāśrama* for Vaiṣṇavas. The first is from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 3.8.9 wherein Parāśara states: 'Viṣṇu who is the supreme person is worshipped by a person whose conduct is in accordance with *varṇāśrama*, there is no other path to satisfy him.'³⁶ The second is from the *Viṣṇu-dharma Purāṇa* 76.31 offering a statement by Bhagavān: 'Śruti, smṛti are my order, one who lives while transgressing these, he cuts my order, he hates me, even if he is my devotee, he is not a Vaiṣṇava.'³⁷ These two prominent texts are revered by Vaiṣṇavas. These two verses are deployed as the opening statements in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*. These verses clearly stipulate that adhering to the rules and regulations of the *varṇāśrama* system not only satisfy Viṣṇu but are indeed orders from Viṣṇu. A Vaiṣṇava, as a worshipper of Viṣṇu, should therefore exhaust all efforts to follow the guidelines of *varṇāśrama* as they are pleasing to Viṣṇu. This of course also indicates that the practice of *karma* is compatible with that of *bhakti*, because ultimately, they both strive for the same purpose, namely the satisfaction of Viṣṇu.

These specialized works are primarily strategic compilations of statements from the foremost teachers of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. Indeed, both works, owe the majority of their passages to their predecessors as observed from the lengthy citations. It is obvious however that their intention was not merely to summarize earlier ideas or to even write a few comments

³³ teṣāṃ eva bahir-mukhyatvaṃ nānyeṣāṃ iti bodhyam, nindā tu tasyaiva śrūyate na tu bhagavad-arpitādi karmaṇah (Monika Horstmann, p.220)

³⁴ bhakti-rūpatvāt sākṣād eva śuddha-bhakti-sādhanatvāt paramparayā bhāva-bhakti-sādhanatvāc ca (Monika Horstmann, p.220)

³⁵ ca tasya dvayasyaiva dvāra-bhūtaṃ karmārpaṇa-rūpam iti (Monika Horstmann, p.221)

³⁶ tatra varṇāśramācāravatā puruṣeṇa paraḥ pumān viṣṇu ārādhyate pañthā nānyat tat-toṣa-kāraṇam iti parāśaroktyā

³⁷ śruti-smṛte mamaivājñe yas te ullaṅghya vartate ājñā-cchedī mama dveṣi mad-bhaktō 'pi na vaiṣṇava iti śrī-bhagavad-uktyā ca

on them. Rather their readers were an audience of scriptural experts who were well acquainted with the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school's leading teachers, the texts attempt to convince them of the value and necessity of following appropriately the injunctions and prohibitions pertaining to *karma*, utilizing the writings of the leading teachers as building blocks to construct their arguments. The primary concern of the teachers referenced is to clarify the verses at hand, whereas these works on *karma* attempt to weave the verses themselves into a coherent system expounding the importance and relevance of the practice of *karma*. This significant historical period for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas also ushers in their first commentary on the *Gītā*, a text widely regarded as a book of action, especially in modern times. This text is therefore one of the most, if not the most, suitable texts within the Hindu tradition through which a theological basis for social and political engagement can be expounded. Considering the wide appeal of the *Gītā* throughout history, and particularly within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, it is certainly surprising that the tradition produced no commentary on the *Gītā* until approximately two hundred years after the tradition's inauguration by Caitanya. It is only in the early eighteenth-century that the first *Gītā* commentary emerges, written by Viśvanātha Cakravartī, a key player in the eighteenth-century. This peculiarity was further accentuated as Viśvanātha's commentary was swiftly followed by another *Gītā* commentary from his student Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, perhaps also inspired by the times.

Such texts thus serve as a bridge between the worlds of *bhakti* and *karma*, mediating between devotion and action. These foundational texts would secure an acceptable place for *dharmic* thought within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, and serve as political tools for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect to justify its authenticity and relevance amongst the myriad of *sampradāyas* prevalent at that time. Just as the tradition had responded to criticisms via Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's *Brahma-sūtras* commentary, similarly the tradition employed these texts to respond to a range of critiques during this period. These three texts, the *Karma-vivṛti*, the first *Gītā* commentaries and the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, promoted the concept of 'good' *karma*, acts that do not impede the practice of *bhakti*, but which were in fact recommended, even required, for novices on the *bhakti* path. Such activities inform aspirants of their eternal nature as servants of Kṛṣṇa; it steadies their practice of *bhakti* and finally directs them to the ultimate goal, *prema-bhakti*. Essentially *karma* was now portrayed as a beneficial practice for the Vaiṣṇava, provided it served as a conjugate towards the practice of *bhakti* and directed one to the desired goal—unadulterated *prema* for Kṛṣṇa. Thus, the traditional purpose of rituals pertaining to *karma* were redirected away from material allurements in the heavenly realms or even liberation from the cycle of rebirth. Now *karma* enabled the sincere practitioner to achieve the highest goal of *bhakti*.

Responding to the political concerns, these specialized works laid the foundation for a transformative dialogue between the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect and the major political powers in the mid-eighteenth century.

Key themes from these works

Although *karma* and *bhakti*'s compatibility is viewed as questionable, and despite the lack of early textual sources within the tradition regarding its theological obligations within the public arena, it is clear from the tradition's history that there exist systems of socio-political engagement founded upon implicit philosophical and theological ideas. Nevertheless, it is not until the eighteenth-century that texts appear solely expanding on the public responsibility for members of the tradition providing frameworks and guidelines to this subject. Four significant voices in this era, Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, Viśvanātha Cakravartī and Jaisingh II in different ways promulgate this development in the eighteenth-century. I will analyze several key themes from their works and in so doing will address the following questions:

1. Are *karma* and *bhakti* compatible and if so can *karma* lead to *bhakti*? Through this question I will probe into the dynamic relationship between socio-political activity and divinity.
2. Can or when should *karma* (and its concomitant interactions within the socio-political domain) be abandoned? In answering this question, I will explore the critical theme of *śraddhā* or faith and analyze its role and influence on the jurisdiction of *karma*.
3. Finally, to what degree are notions such as '*lokasaṅgraha*' or public responsibility or public conduct/behavior fundamental to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition's engagement in the public sphere?

For the remainder of this chapter I will focus on the first and in many ways the foundational theme noted above, by exploring the theological rationalizations for the synthesis of *karma* and *bhakti* concentrating on the *Karma-vivṛti* of Kṛṣṇadeva. In the following chapter, I will respond to the remaining two questions, focusing on the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, an exposition on the jurisdiction or authority of *karma* for a *bhakti* practitioner. And in the fifth and final chapter I will explore these themes as presented respectively in Viśvanātha and Baladeva's commentaries on the *Bhāgavad-Gītā*.

Kṛṣṇadeva on the compatibility between *karma* and *bhakti*

The *Karma-vivṛti* was composed by Kṛṣṇadeva on the order of king Jaisingh II. This is evident from the opening passage of the text where Kṛṣṇadeva states: ‘Homage to Śrī Rāma. By the order of the glorious king of kings [Jaisingh II], after paying respects at the feet of Caitanya, for the sake of purification of *karma*, I have written this exposition on *karma*.’³⁸ As explained in the previous chapter, Kṛṣṇadeva having studied with Viśvanātha in Vṛndāvana, relocates to Jaipur to perform a critical role for the king, serving as a *paṇḍita* and chief religious advisor. Considering Kṛṣṇadeva’s intimate relationship with the king, it is highly probable that he composed this text to address the king’s desire to reconcile social responsibility with the pursuit of devotional liberation.

The *Karma-vivṛti* itself is a careful selection of important passages from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, *Bhāgavad-Gītā*, the works of Rūpa Gosvāmī such as the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, the works of Jīva Gosvāmī such as the *Bhakti-Sandarbhā*, the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* along with Sanatāna Gosvāmī’s commentary, commentarial passages from Śrīdhara Svāmī on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and Viśvanātha’s *Sārārtha-darśiṇī* (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* commentary). The author focuses on the theology of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Gosvāmīs, especially Jīva Gosvāmī. In fact, there are very few passages composed by Kṛṣṇadeva himself, whose main contribution was therefore to philosophically establish and strengthen his argument on *karma* by invoking the authority of respected stalwarts of Vaiṣṇava philosophy. Kṛṣṇadeva’s compilation therefore presents a comprehensive perspective of the tradition’s position on *karma*. He argues vehemently that *karma* and *bhakti* are entirely compatible and puts forth the notion that *karma* has a vital function to play for a *bhakti* practitioner and even for one who has attained perfection on the *bhakti* path.

In the *Karma-vivṛti*, Kṛṣṇadeva strives to demonstrate that the performance of *karma* is conducive to the pursuit of *bhakti*, the ultimate goal for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practitioner. I will share two pivotal examples of how Kṛṣṇadeva accomplishes this. In both examples, he refutes presentations that suggest *karma* and *bhakti* are not compatible for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practitioners. In the first example, I will explore how he offers citations from various key canonical texts of tradition, while simultaneously invoking prominent teachers of the tradition to provide a corrective reading of a passage in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Rūpa Gosvāmī’s seminal text on *bhakti*, which apparently discredits the notion that *karma* can be offered to the Lord as a form of *bhakti*.

³⁸ śrī rāmāya namaḥ. śrīmad-rājādhirājānām ājñayā karma-śuddhaye, natvā caitanya-pādāñ ca karmaṇaṃ vivṛtiḥ kṛtā. (Monika Horstmann, p.218)

Example 1 Kṛṣṇadeva's refutation of *karma* not being considered *dāsyam*

In this example, he quotes passages BRS 1.2.183-186 which appear to be a source of controversy:

(183) *Dāsyam* is offering activities [to him] and acting as his servant in every way. (184) Among them, the former (definition) is described in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, 'Action [according] to one's nature offered to the Supreme becomes *dharma* of the Supreme, *bhāgavata dharma*. What to speak of that action that is directly offered to him? (such as hearing about Supreme and so on)'. (185) There are two kinds of service offered to Kṛṣṇa by Vaiṣṇavas. Auspicious actions according to one's nature and likewise *japa*, meditation, worship and so on. (186) The qualification to perform activities is said to be small for those of small faith, [nevertheless] if offered to the Supreme it is considered *dāsyam* thus some persons say.³⁹

Two types of *dāsyam*⁴⁰ are illustrated here, one of which includes offering *karma* to the Supreme. There appears to exist some controversy within the tradition regarding the inclusion of offering *karma* within the category of *dāsyam*. For instance, Kṛṣṇadeva omits Jīva Gosvāmī's comments on these verses where he states that although some agree that offering *karma* is *dāsyam*, nevertheless Rūpa Gosvāmī, the author of the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* does not consider it *dāsyam*.⁴¹ Jīva Gosvāmī also explains that *karma* in this context is not any action but action according to *varṇāśrama-dharma*.⁴² Mukunda das Gosvāmī in his commentary to BRS 1.2.186

³⁹ *dāsyam* karmārpaṇam tasya kairkaryam api sarvathā | tatrādyaṃ yathā skānde, tasmin samarpitaṃ karma svābhāvikam apīśvare, bhaved bhāgavato dharmas tat-karma kimutārpitaṃ iti | karma svābhāvikaṃ bhadraṃ japa-dhyānārcanādi ca, itīdaṃ dvidhaṃ kṛṣṇe vaiṣṇavair dāsyam arpitam | mṛdu-śraddhasya kathitā svalpā karmādhikāritā, tad-arpitam harau dāsyam iti kaiścid udīryata iti | (Monika Horstmann, p.223)

⁴⁰ This section of the text is describing *sādhana-bhakti*, and therefore *dāsyam* here refers to one of the nine kinds of devotional service (BP 7.5.23) and not to the *rasa* itself.

⁴¹ BRS 1.2.183 Jīva's comments: *karmārpaṇam ity anūdyā dāsyam iti vidhīyate, tad etac cānyamatam, sva-matam tu kairkaryam iti, tac ca kairkaro' smīti abhimānaḥ*

⁴² BRS 1.2.185 Jīva's comments: *tat-tad-varṇāśramādy-upādhi-svabhāva-prāptaṃ*

suggests that ‘some persons’ refers to Śrīdhara Svāmī and so on,⁴³ who declares that *dāsyam* is equal to *karmārpanam* or offering *karma*, in his commentary to BP 7.5.23. This would be quite an endorsement for *karma* as *dāsyam* is considered one of nine direct forms of *bhakti* as illustrated in BP 7.5.23. Thus, it appears that Rūpa Gosvāmī reluctantly presents a second alternative to accommodate Śrīdhara Svāmī’s perspective. If this is the case, this illustrates the high regard and respect the tradition had for Śrīdhara Svāmī’s teachings. Kṛṣṇadeva’s reference to this passage outlines the concerns within the tradition of *karma* and *bhakti*’s compatibility. Following his reference to BRS 1.2.183-186, Kṛṣṇadeva responds to the concerns regarding the offering of *karma* to be considered *dāsyam*. Kṛṣṇadeva states: ‘Even if offering of *karma* is not considered to be *dāsyam* nevertheless it is certainly established as the *dharma* of the Supreme and thus a form of *bhakti*.’⁴⁴ To reinforce his position he quotes *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, where Sanatāna refers to BP 11.2.34, BP 11.29.8 and BG 9.27 to show that the offering of *karma* to the Supreme is *dharma* of the Supreme and thus leads to self-realization. In this way Kṛṣṇadeva argues that although *dāsyam* may not include the offering of *karma* according to some, this offering of *karma* is still imbued with the nature of *bhāgavata* and hence serves the same purpose as *bhakti*. Following his reference to Sanatāna, Kṛṣṇadeva then turns his attention to Jīva’s comments in the *Bhakti-Sandarbha*. Jīva illustrates that there are three types of *bhakti* in *Sandarbha* 217:

This *bhakti* is of three types: *āropa-siddhā*, established by imposition; *saṅga-siddhā*, established by association; and *svarūpa-siddhā*; established by its own nature. Out of these, *āropa-siddhā bhakti* consists of *karma* and similar practices, which although devoid of *bhakti* by themselves attain the quality of *bhakti* by being offered to the Supreme. *Saṅga-siddhā bhakti* refers to *jñāna* and *karma*, which although devoid of *bhakti* by themselves, become component parts of *bhakti* by being utilized as assistants of devotion. Two examples of verses are provided that illustrate this: BP 11.3.22 (Learn the nature of the Supreme...) and BP 11.3.23 (Detach the mind from everything...)⁴⁵

⁴³ mṛdv iti | kaiścīt śrīdhara-svāmi-prabhṛtibhis tat svalpam karma arpitam sat

⁴⁴ yady api karmārpaṇasya dāsyatvaṃ na saṃmatam tathāpi bhāgavata-dharmatvaṃ tu siddhām eva tad eva hi bhakti-rūpatvam (Monika Horstmann, p.223)

⁴⁵ sā bhaktis trividhā āropa-siddhā saṅga-siddhā svarūpa-siddhā ca, tatrāropa-siddhā svato bhaktivābhāve’pi bhagavad-arpaṇādīnā bhaktitvaṃ prāptā karmādirūpā, saṅga-siddhā svato-bhaktivābhāve’pi tat-parikaratayā saṃsthāpanena tatra bhāgavatān dharmān śikṣed ityādi

In other words, as stated in BP 11.3.23 the act of detaching the mind from matter in itself has nothing to do with *bhakti*, but when executed intentionally as an aid to devotion it becomes surcharged with the potency of *bhakti*. In a similar fashion, *karma*, when offered to the Supreme, can be classified as *āropa-siddhā* or *saṅga-siddhā*, which are valid types of *bhakti*. Jīva Gosvāmī continues:

Even spontaneous actions acquire the nature of the Supreme if offered to the Supreme, so what to speak of action in accordance with Vedic injunctions. BP 11.2.36 states: Whatever action one does with the body, mind, senses, speech, intellect and self, following one's own nature, one should offer that with the understanding, this is for the Supreme Nārāyaṇa.⁴⁶

According to this statement, whatever action is offered to the Supreme is of the same nature as the Supreme even if it is not outlined by Vedic injunctions. This verse demonstrates emphatically the broad scope of potential offerings to the Supreme Nārāyaṇa. Jīva further explains that verse BP 11.2.36 mentioned is preceded by a specific request from king Nimi to hear about the sublime nature of *bhagavad-dharma*. As a consequence, BP 11.2.36 must be included in the category of *bhagavad-dharma*, for it appears in the natural conversational sequence. Furthermore, because there is an overlapping of the characteristics of *karma* offered to the Lord and *bhakti*, such actions should be considered non-different to *bhakti*. Thus, Kṛṣṇadeva refers to Jīva's *Bhakti-Sandarbha* to illustrate that in various ways the offering of *karma* is considered a form of *bhakti*.

In summary, through this example, Kṛṣṇadeva demonstrates that *karma* offered to the Supreme must at least be considered a form of *bhagavad-dharma* or *bhakti*, if not directly *dāsyam*, one of the nine direct types of *bhakti* which are the primary means of service for *bhakti* practitioners.⁴⁷ He justifies his stance by referencing the works of the foundational teachers of

prakaraṇeṣu sarvato manaso 'saṅgam ityādinā labdha-tad-antaḥ pātā jñāna-karma-tad-aṅga-rūpā ityādy anantaram (Monika Horstmann, p.226)

⁴⁶ tatra yadṛcchika-ceṣṭayāpi bhagavad-arpitatvena bhagavad-dharmatvaṃ bhavati kimuta vaidika-karmaṇa iti tasyā api tad-rūpatvaṃ āha kāyena vācā manasendriyair vā buddhy-ātmanā vānusṛta-svabhāvāt, karoti yad yat sakalaṃ parasmai nārāyaṇāyeti samarpayet tat ityādi (Monika Horstmann, p.226)

⁴⁷ BP 7.5.23

the tradition, such as Sanatāna Gosvāmī and Jīva Gosvāmī. If the offering of *karma* were to be included within the process of *dāsyam*, then this would be a significant endorsement for the compatibility of *karma* and *bhakti*. In light of Jīva Gosvāmī's view that Rūpa Gosvāmī rejected the offering of *karma* as *dāsyam* in the passages of BRS 1.2.183-186, and considering that Rūpa is regarded to be a leading teacher of the tradition, many *bhakti* practitioners would perhaps disregard offering *karma* to the Supreme as a method for progress. Kṛṣṇadeva therefore goes to great lengths to illustrate that even if it is not to be accepted as a form of *dāsyam*, appropriate *karma* practice still culminates in *bhakti*. In this way, he promotes the adoption of *karma* offered to the Supreme as conducive to the ultimate purpose of the *bhakti* practitioner. What is especially noteworthy in his presentation, is that he gathers citations to offer a corrective reading of a key passage in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, a foundational and highly revered text within the tradition. He draws on canonical texts such as the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and the *Bhakti-Sandarbha* to accomplish this. He attempts to reclaim Jīva Gosvāmī's reading of this section in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* which states that Rūpa Gosvāmī does not consider offering of the activities as *dāsyam*, using largely Jīva Gosvāmī himself to accomplish this. We will see that he adopts a similar strategy in the next example.

Example 2 Kṛṣṇadeva's refutation of an interpretation of BP 1.2.6 which discredits *karma* leading to *bhakti*

The next significant contribution that displays how the performance of *karma* is conducive to the pursuit of *bhakti* by Kṛṣṇadeva in the *Karma-vivṛti* involves the exploration of the verse BP 1.2.6. This verse addresses a vital question in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. A sage known as Sūta Gosvāmī is responding to questions presented by the sages of the *Naimiṣāranya* forest. They have inquired into what is the most essential instruction from the Vedic corpus for the purpose of enlightenment for the general populace. BP 1.2.6 appears as part of the response and proves to be critical for Kṛṣṇadeva as it highlights the connection between *dharma* (which includes *karma*) and *bhakti*. For Kṛṣṇadeva it was vital that any doubts connecting these two categories are clearly removed. According to Monika Horstmann this specific passage was the subject of continuous exegetical attention from various scholars of sects in this period.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Horstmann, "Theology and statecraft", p.58

As explained previously, the king was concerned with the role of orthodox *dharma* in *bhakti* practice, and therefore a number of commentators including Kṛṣṇadeva endeavoured to firmly establish the practice of *dharma*, and hence *karma*, as veritable paths to *bhakti*. It was crucial for Kṛṣṇadeva as a close adviser to the king to support this viewpoint, even if it required the adoption of severe measures. Therefore, Kṛṣṇadeva asserts that BP 1.2.6 proves categorically that *karma* leads to *bhakti*. He analyses various teachers' commentaries on this verse, and refutes a significant teacher's position which stood in opposition to his viewpoint. He begins by stating:

The offering of *karma* and so on to the Lord causes pure(*suddha*) *bhakti* is proved within the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* – BP 1.2.6 'Certainly the highest *dharma* of mankind is that from which there is *bhakti* unto he is who is beyond the senses (the Supreme). *Bhakti* is causeless and unbroken, by which the self is completely satisfied.'⁴⁹

He also shares comments from Śrīdhara Svāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī and Sanatāna Gosvāmī, the leading teachers of the tradition, in relation to BP 1.2.6. Each of these teachers expand on the meaning of different aspects of the verse. However, each of their positions lends support to Kṛṣṇadeva's interpretation of the verse, which is that the highest *dharma* of mankind consists of those acts which lead to *bhakti* characterized by hearing, chanting and so on; and *dharma* here can include *karma* offered to the Lord. Kṛṣṇadeva has intentionally shared the perspectives of the founding teachers of the tradition as this evidence provides the basis for Kṛṣṇadeva's refutation of another prominent teacher's comments on this verse. Surprisingly, the *purvapaksa* (opponent) is Viśvanātha, Kṛṣṇadeva's very own teacher from Vṛndavana.⁵⁰ This is especially significant since it demonstrates the extent to which Kṛṣṇadeva was willing to endeavor in order to establish *karma* as an aide to *bhakti*. As is custom, Kṛṣṇadeva reveals neither the name of his *purvapaksa* nor that of the commentary to which he refers. However, a careful examination of the *Sārārtha-darśinī*,

⁴⁹ *atha bhagavad-arpita-karmādeḥ śuddha-bhakti-hetutve pramāṇāni yathā śrī-bhāgavate, sa vai puṁsāṃ paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje ahaituky apratihātā yayātmā saṃprasīdati* (Monika Horstmann, p.227)

⁵⁰ Kṛṣṇadeva also promoted the *svakīyā* view, in contrast to Viśvanātha who promoted the *parakīyā* view. The debate became an important topic during the reign of Jaisingh. Jaisingh had sent Kṛṣṇadeva to Bengal to canvass on behalf of the *svakīyā* view. Whereas, Viśvanātha wrote a text known as the *svakīyā-tva-nirāsa-vicāra* or the refutation of *svakīyā-vāda* philosophy, advocating explicitly the *parikīyā-vāda* proposition. It appears that there were several tenants of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology that they held differing viewpoints upon.

Viśvanātha's commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, reveals the object of Kṛṣṇadeva's criticism is his own teacher's alternative reading of this verse. Before analyzing the specifics of Kṛṣṇadeva's refutation, I first outline Viśvanātha's perspective on this crucial verse as also shared by Kṛṣṇadeva in his *Karma-vivṛti*.

Viśvanātha states in his *Sārārtha-darśiṇī* on BP 1.2.6:

This *dharma*, for people, i.e. only for all human beings, is the higher one, i.e. the highest, characterized by hearing, chanting and so on. As stated in (BP 6.3.22:) Indeed in this world the supreme *dharma* of all beings is recognized as *bhakti-yoga* to the Supreme beginning with chanting of his name... Therefore, *dharma*, distinguished by the word '*para*' (highest) is only *bhakti-yoga*. Thus here (BP 6.3.22), the usage of '*vat[up]*' suffix [in the word '*etāvān*,' 'that much'] and the word '*eva*' (only) forbids anything else from being expressed as supreme *dharma*. (BP 1.2.6) 'from which there is *bhakti*', devotion means characterized by *prema*, and 'causeless' means that it is only produced without a cause. For these reasons, mixed devotion is excluded.⁵¹

We must remember that BP 1.2.6 is a defining and pivotal verse for Kṛṣṇadeva, who utilises it to prove that *karma* offered to the Lord leads to *bhakti*. Prior to his refutation of Viśvanātha's commentary on this verse, he outlines the viewpoint of other prominent teachers accepted as authorities on the subject of *bhakti* and demonstrates that their comments are consistent with his own position on *karma*. Only then does he approach Viśvanātha's position, which proposes that *para-dharma*, the highest *dharma* in this verse should be accepted as only *bhakti-yoga* characterized by hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa and similar direct *bhakti* practices. This categorically excludes *karma* as a path leading to *bhakti*. For Viśvanātha, *para-dharma* can be

⁵¹ yat tu sa puṁsāṃ puṁmātrāṇām eva dharmāḥ paraḥ paramāḥ śravaṇa-kīrtanādi lakṣaṇāḥ, yad uktaṃ etāvān eva loke'smin puṁsāṃ dharmāḥ paraḥ smṛtaḥ bhakti-yogo bhagavati tan-nāma-grahaṇādibhir ityataḥ, para-śabda-viśeṣyo dharmo bhakti-yoga eva bhaved iti, tathātra vatup-pratyayenaiva kāreṇa caitad anyasya parama-dharma-pada-vācyatvaṃ niṣiddhaṃ, yato bhaktiḥ prema-lakṣaṇā bhavet, ahaitukī hetuṃ vinaivotpadyamānā iti, saguṇā vyāvṛttetyādi (Monika Horstmann, p.229)

only *sādhana-bhakti*, which then leads to *prema-bhakti*, whereas for Kṛṣṇadeva *para-dharma* is broader and includes *varṇāśrama*, and in the context of this verse leads to *sādhana-bhakti*. Thus, Kṛṣṇadeva is faced with the uncomfortable but vital task of refuting Viśvanātha's comments on this verse. I will now attempt to systemize the principal objections that Kṛṣṇadeva stresses in response to the different aspects of Viśvanātha's reading. This exercise will highlight ever more strongly Kṛṣṇadeva's support for the role of *karma* in the life of a *bhakti* practitioner.

Objection 1: Viśvanātha utilizes BP 6.3.22 to define BP 1.2.6 and thus forbids anything other than *bhakti-yoga* from being expressed as *para-dharma*

It is crucial for Viśvanātha to refer to BP 6.3.22 to define the term '*para-dharma*' in BP 1.2.6, which he states can only mean *sādhana-bhakti* and thus does not include *karma* offered to the Lord. Therefore, considering Kṛṣṇadeva's objection to this understanding⁵² he begins a lengthy refutation regarding the usage of this verse (BP 6.3.22) in defining BP 1.2.6. He provides the following reasons:

i) The first argument he states is: 'BP 6.3.22 is spoken well after BP 1.2.6 and BP 1.2.6 is an unprecedented statement.'⁵³ BP 1.2.6 is referred to as *apūrvatvāt*, this expression denotes an idea that is introduced for the first time in a narrative or a passage, appearing at times suddenly and often denotes the central purpose or import of the passage. In this scenario Kṛṣṇadeva, argues that *para-dharma* has not been discussed earlier, and thus nothing earlier can be used to define BP 1.2.6, what to speak of something later. Therefore, as BP 6.3.22 appears significantly later there is no logical reason to link the two and thus use BP 6.3.22 to define the meaning of BP 1.2.6.

⁵² tatra śravaṇa-kīrtanādi-lakṣaṇatvaṃ kutaḥ prāptam, arthād iti cet yad uktam ityādi hetūpanyāsānupapattiḥ yad uktam ityādikam etat sādhakam iti cet tad api na (Monika Horstmann, p.230)

⁵³ etāvān ity asya paścād uktatvena sa vai puṃsām ity asya prāthamikatvenāpūrvatvāt (Monika Horstmann, p.230)

ii) Secondly, the words ‘from which comes *bhakti* for *Adhokṣaja* (the Supreme) in BP 1.2.6 would have lost its meaning.’⁵⁴ The assertion that *bhakti* leads to *bhakti* does not appear to follow any logical sequence, as one would expect a cause and its effect to be two separate items.⁵⁵

iii) It is also stressed in numerous scriptures that *dharma* means *varṇāśrama* and therefore it seems unlikely that *bhakti* would be equated with *para-dharma* in this instance. He lists various instances where the word *dharma* means *varṇāśrama*:

BP 6.1.40: ‘*Dharma* is that which is contained in the Vedas’; BP 1.2.8: ‘the well-executed *dharma*’; BP 1.2.13: ‘therefore of the *dharma* executed by the people’; and BP 1.2.9: ‘of the *dharma* which is meant for liberation’. Another source is *Dharma-śāstras*. Since what is experienced in hundreds of sources is only *dharma* characterized by the practice of *varṇāśrama*, this meaning only is present.⁵⁶

Considering these examples, Kṛṣṇadeva argues that there is no compelling reason to take an alternative meaning of *dharma* in this case.

iv) Kṛṣṇadeva also argues that it would be inconsistent to replace *dharma* with *bhakti* because such an interpretation would then render other significant verses illogical. He references BP 1.2.8 as an example. Following shortly after BP 1.2.6, this verse would then read ‘*sādhana-bhakti* is considered useless if it doesn’t bring attraction to the narrations of the Supreme’.⁵⁷ This would

⁵⁴ sa ity asya yato bhaktir adhokṣaja ityādeś cānartha-vākyaṅpattēś ca (Monika Horstmann, p.230)

⁵⁵ However, I must state that this argument by Kṛṣṇadeva is quite radical considering the three levels of *bhakti* described by Rūpa Gosvāmī in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.1, which although distinct are all categorized as *bhakti*. According to Rūpa Gosvāmī there is devotion in practice (*sādhana-bhakti*), devotion with emotion (*bhāva-bhakti*) and devotion with love (*prema-bhakti*). Although, the first stage is considered devotion in practice and the last two stages are considered to be *sādhya-bhakti* or the devotion to be attained, they are all considered to be *bhakti*.

⁵⁶ dharma-śabdena veda-praṇihito dharma ityatra, dharmah svanuṣṭhita ity atra, atah pumbhir ityādaḥ svanuṣṭhasya dharmasyety atra dharmasya hy āpavargasyetyatra dharma-śāstrādaḥ ca śataśas tathā pratītir varṇāśramācāra-lakṣaṇasyaivopasthityā (Monika Horstmann, p.231)

⁵⁷ bhakti-padena ca notpādayed yadi ratim ityādi vyatirekokty anurodhena prathamopasthitatvena ca kathā-ruci-lakṣaṇāyā bhakti-rūpa-sthityā ca, asaṅgatavāpattīś ca na ca vyatirekokter anyārthaḥ saṅgacchate (Monika Horstmann, p.231)

not be a sound statement from a theological perspective as *sādhana-bhakti* itself involves hearing narrations of the Supreme. Indeed, exploring Viśvanātha's comments on this verse shows that he accepts *dharma* in BP 1.2.8 to be *varṇāśrama-dharma* and not *sādhana-bhakti*. However, Viśvanātha maintains his stance and argues that this verse explains why *dharma* in the form of *varṇāśrama* should not be considered *para-dharma* (following on from his reading of BP 1.2.6). 'He firstly states that following *varṇāśrama* leads to the heavenly realms and not attraction to the Lord.'⁵⁸ To substantiate this point, he quotes BP 4.31.10 and BP 4.31.12. 'Therefore, one should abandon those duties (*varṇāśrama*) and perform *para-dharma* mentioned in the previous verse (BP 1.2.6) consisting of hearing and chanting about the Lord.'⁵⁹

Viśvanātha then raises a possible objection by quoting BP 11.20.11 ('In this very life situated in one's duty according to *varṇāśrama*, free from sin and pure, one obtains pure knowledge or, by fortune *bhakti* unto me'⁶⁰). According to this verse *karma* could appear as leading to *bhakti*. He admits there may be some truth to this, but notes that the word '*yadṛcchayā*' is used which denotes the notion of self-manifestation, 'by itself', and therefore infers that *bhakti* is self-created and not even *niskāma-karma* (desireless action) is the cause of *bhakti*.⁶¹ Interestingly, he quotes BP 1.2.6 to substantiate this view. Viśvanātha's interpretation of '*yadi*' plays an important role in his understanding of BP 1.2.8. Generally, '*yadi*' translates to 'if', which when applied to verse BP 1.2.8 would mean that *varṇāśrama* is useless only if it does not generate attraction to the Lord. As Viśvanātha considers *varṇāśrama* as always useless, in this context, he elaborates on the alternative meanings of '*yadi*', suggesting that '*yadi*' here indicates disgust generated from wasted labor or effort. He quotes the *Medinī Sanskrit* dictionary which states that *yadi* indicates disgust or doubt.⁶² Alternatively *yadi* can be used to express doubt where no doubt exists as in the example 'if the Vedas are proof'⁶³. He also references the sentence 'You, the protector, place your foot on the head of obstacles'⁶⁴ wherein *yadi* expresses certainty, which is also how Śrīdhara Svāmī explains *yadi*.⁶⁵ In this way Viśvanātha argues firmly

⁵⁸ viṣvaksena kathāṣu ratiṃ notpādayet karmaṇā pitṛloka iti śruteḥ

⁵⁹ tasmāt sva-dharmaṃ tyaktvā śravaṇa-kīrtanādi-lakṣaṇaḥ pūrvoktaḥ paro dharma evānuṣṭheya

⁶⁰ asmil loke vartamānaḥ sva-dharmastho 'naghaḥ śuciḥ jñānam viśuddham āpnoti mad-bhaktiḥ vā yadṛcchayā

⁶¹ yadṛcchā svairitety abhidhānāt kaṣṭa-kalpanayā vyākhyānantare bhakteḥ sva-prakāśatvaṃ na siddhed iti tad anāḍṛtam ity ato niṣkāmo'pi karma-yogo na bhakter hetur ity āha

⁶² yadīti garhāyāṃ śrama-janakatād garhitety arthaḥ, yadi garhā-vikalpayor iti medinī

⁶³ yadi vedāḥ pramāṇam

⁶⁴ dhatte padam tvam avitā yadi vighna-mūrdhni

⁶⁵ atra yadīti śabdo niścaye iti śrī-swāmi-caraṇānāṃ vyākhyānāc ca

that *karma* or *varṇāśrama* is always useless and thus should not be accommodated nor adopted. Therefore, although Kṛṣṇadeva suggests that BP 1.2.8 would not be comprehensible if Viśvanātha rendered *para-dharma* to mean *sādhana-bhakti* in BP 1.2.6, in contrast Viśvanātha employs BP 1.2.8 to further substantiate his view point regarding the futility of *varṇāśrama*.

v) Kṛṣṇadeva also objects to Viśvanātha's claim that in BP 6.3.22 the suffix 'vat' and emphatic particle 'eva' do not permit *bhakti* from being expressed as anything other than *para-dharma*. Kṛṣṇadeva counters that BP 6.3.22 does not prohibit *para-dharma* from being called anything other than *bhakti*, but rather emphasizes that *bhakti-yoga* is the highest *dharma*. This is corroborated by alternative uses of the term *para-dharma* in verses such as BP 7.15.13: '*para-dharma* [is a *dharma*] inspired by others' and BG 3.35: 'the other's *dharma* (*para-dharma*) brings fear.'⁶⁶. Kṛṣṇadeva therefore argues that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* itself does not support the contention that *para-dharma* refers exclusively to *bhakti* as Viśvanātha claims and thus reinforces Kṛṣṇadeva's assertion that *para-dharma* can also include the offering of *karma*.

vi) Furthermore, Kṛṣṇadeva argues that BP 6.3.22 and BP 1.2.6 do not deal with the same subject, and must be understood with due consideration to their own individual fields or contexts. BP 1.2.6 describes that *dharma* which generates *bhakti* to the Lord as superior to all other types of *dharma*, whereas BP 6.3.22 deals with *bhakti's* superiority over everything. In other words, BP 6.3.22 does not forbid offered *karma* to mean *para-dharma*, as the emphasis explained within BP 6.3.22 is different.⁶⁷

Considering Viśvanātha's usage of BP 6.3.22 to define the term '*para-dharma*' in BP 1.2.6 as pivotal in his argument, Kṛṣṇadeva is obliged to provide a lengthy and thorough refutation to this claim and he strives to accomplish this in numerous ways.

⁶⁶ na ca etāvān evetyādinā tad-anyasya parama-dharma-śabda-vācyatā-niṣedhaḥ kriyate, kintu bhakti-yogasya sarvotkrṣṭa-dharmatvaṃ vidhīyate, anyathā para-dharmo 'nyacodita ityatra para-dharmo bhayāvaha ityādāv api para-dharma-pada-vācyā-niṣedhaḥ syāt (Monika Horstmann, p.232)

⁶⁷ na ca bhagavad-arpita-karmādeḥ parama-dharmatva svīkāre etāvān eva ity evakārāsaṅgati, samāna-viṣayatvābhāvāt, yato 'tra para-śabdena dharmah svanuṣṭhita iti vyatirekoktyā dharmeṣv evāsya śreṣṭhavyaṃ bodhyate na tv anya-sarvotkrṣṭatvam, etāvān ity atra tu sarvotkrṣṭatvam eva (Monika Horstmann, p.235)

Objection 2: Viśvanātha argues that in BP 1.2.6 ‘*para-dharma*’ is equal to ‘*sādhana-bhakti*’ only, which subsequently would indicate that in BP 1.2.6 ‘*bhakti*’ is equal to ‘*prema-bhakti*’

Viśvanātha claims that the term ‘*bhakti*’ in BP 1.2.6 is characterised by *prema*, rendering it into *prema-bhakti*, and therefore *para-dharma* is *sādhana-bhakti*. The intended meaning is that by the practice of *sādhana-bhakti* one achieves the *sādyā*, the goal, which is *prema-bhakti*, which is synonymous with the terms *para-dharma* and *bhakti* respectively in BP 1.2.6. This conflicts with Kṛṣṇadeva’s stance as depicted earlier. Viśvanātha once again refers to another verse in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* to validate his view point, however Kṛṣṇadeva declares Viśvanātha’s usage of this verse inappropriate and further provides references from other verses in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* to support his position that ‘*bhakti*’ in BP 1.2.6 implies *sādhana-bhakti* and not *prema-bhakti*.

i) Viśvanātha quotes BP 11.3.31 in his commentary to substantiate his perspective that *bhakti* here means *prema*. Thus, this verse proposes that (*sādhana-*) *bhakti* causes (*prema-*) *bhakti*. Kṛṣṇadeva adopts a grammatical argument to suggest that the *bhakti* referred to in BP 1.2.6 is different to that referenced in BP 11.3.31. He claims that in BP 11.3.31 the usage of *sañjātayā* as an adjective of *bhakti* indicates *bhakti* causes *bhakti*. In regard to BP 11.3.31 Kṛṣṇadeva expresses no objective to *bhakti* causing *bhakti* however he stresses that the situation in BP 1.2.6 is different as such an adjective is not present.⁶⁸ In other words, there is no corresponding reason to claim that *bhakti* means *prema* in BP 1.2.6, and so referring to BP 11.3.31 is inappropriate according to Kṛṣṇadeva.

ii) Kṛṣṇadeva further argues that *bhakti* in BP 1.2.6 does not imply *prema* because it is modified by the words *ahaitiki* (motivationless) and *apratihata* (uninterrupted) which are also characteristic of a generic *sādhana-bhakti*. He also highlights that BP 1.2.7 is a continuation of BP 1.2.6, and the word ‘*bhakti-yoga*’ appears in BP 1.2.7 which implies a practice.⁶⁹ Furthermore,

⁶⁸ kiṃ ca, yato bhaktiḥ prema-lakṣaṇety apy anupapannam, tasyā upasthāpakābhāvāt, na ca bhaktyā sañjātayā bhaktyety uktibhir bhakti-padam eva tasyā upasthāpakam iti vācyam, tatra bhaktyā sañjāyati viśeṣaṇa-viśiṣṭasya bhakti-padasya atra tu tad-abhāvāt (Monika Horstmann, p.232)

⁶⁹ anya-viśeṣaṇānām sādhana-bhakti-sādhāraṇatvāt, agrima-padye bhakti-yoga-padopanyāsena tan-nirākaraṇāc ca (Monika Horstmann, p.233)

BP 1.2.7 states that the result of *bhakti-yoga* as *jñāna* (knowledge) and *vairāgya* (detachment), characteristics which are symptomatic of *sādhana-bhakti* rather than *prema-bhakti*. As one who has reached the stage of *prema* has already subsumed *jñāna* and *vairāgya*. By this logic, therefore, the word *bhakti* in BP 1.2.6 must refer to *sādhana* and not *prema* according to Kṛṣṇadeva.

iii) Kṛṣṇadeva proceeds to propose that the direct meaning should be applied to BP 1.2.7, whereby *bhakti-yoga* means *sādhana-bhakti*, and this implies that the same *sādhana-bhakti* is the subject of BP 1.2.6. He further adds that the direct meaning is also clear in other verses such as BP 11.20.6 where *bhakti-yoga* is defined as steps to perfection.⁷⁰ For some scriptural statements the secondary meaning is appropriate because the direct meaning is inadequate in some way, however in this instance the direct meaning is entirely acceptable in the given context.

iv) Kṛṣṇadeva also presents other verses such as BP 3.5.13 and BP 2.3.12 that similarly illustrate how *sādhana-bhakti* leads to *jñāna* and *vairāgya*.⁷¹ Kṛṣṇadeva invokes BP 2.3.12 in particular to argue that here *bhakti-yoga* cannot be accepted as *prema-bhakti* because of the usage of the word '*atha*', which suggests that *bhakti* arises immediately after detachment, whereas *prema* takes a far longer time to fructify.⁷² In this case, therefore, *bhakti* must refer to *sādhana* and not *prema*.

As a consequence of Viśvanātha's claim that the term '*bhakti*' in BP 1.2.6 is actually *prema-bhakti*, and *para-dharma* is *sādhana-bhakti*, Kṛṣṇadeva provides an extended refutation, claiming inappropriate usage of verses, non-acceptance of direct meanings, and so on. Thus, he argues

⁷⁰ na ca tatrāpi bhakti-yoga-padasya yogās trayo mayā proktā nṛṇāṃ śreyo vidhīsayā, jñānaṃ karma bhaktiś ca nopāyo 'nyo 'sti kutracid ityādy ukta-mukhyārtha-bādhakaṃ tad-upasthāpakaṃ ca kiṃcid asti (Monika Horstmann, p.233)

⁷¹ sā śraddhadhānasya vivardhamānā viraktim anyatra karoti puṃsa ityādau jñānaṃ yad āpratinivṛtta-guṇormi-cakram ātma-prasāda uta yatra guṇeṣv asaṅgaḥ, kaivalya-sammata-pathas tv atha bhakti-yogaḥ ko nivṛtto hari-kathāsu ratiṃ na kuryād ityādau ca sādhana-bhakter api jñāna-vairāgya-janakatva-śruteḥ, janayaty āśu vairāgyam ityādau vairāgyādi-janakatvasyāpi sādhana-bhakti-sādhāraṇatvāt (Monika Horstmann, p.233)

⁷² na ca kaivalya-sammata-pathas tv atha bhakti-yoga ityādau kevala-bhakti-yoga-padenāpi prema-bhaktir ukteti vācyam, tatrāpy atha-pada-samabhivyāhārāt, atha-śabdasyānantaryārthatvāt (Monika Horstmann, p.234)

vehemently that ‘*bhakti*’ in BP 1.2.6 means *sādhana-bhakti* and not *prema-bhakti*, and hence permits *para-dharma* to include the offering of *karma*.

Objection 3: Viśvanātha argues that *bhakti* is completely causeless

We now turn to Kṛṣṇadeva’s final major objection, Viśvanātha’s treatment of the word ‘*ahautiki*’ in BP 1.2.6. This term is glossed by Viśvanātha as produced without a cause, thus he states that *bhakti* is causeless. Therefore, *karma* cannot be a cause of *bhakti* as there is no cause, thus *sādhana-bhakti* is itself the cause of *prema-bhakti* as *bhakti* is self-manifest. Viśvanātha also further quotes BP 11.12.9 and BP 3.29.11 to substantiate his claim. Kṛṣṇadeva begins his refutation by continuing with further comments on BP 2.3.12 raised earlier. *Bhakti*’s causeless nature is an important feature of Viśvanātha’s teachings and is a prevalent theme in several of his literary contributions such as the *Mādhurya Kādambinī*, his *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* commentary, and so forth.

i) Kṛṣṇadeva firstly argues that there are numerous adjectives for *bhakti-yoga* stated in BP 2.3.12 such as *guṇeṣu asaṅga* or detachment from modes, *ātma-prasāda* or satisfaction of the mind, *kaivalya-sammata-pathas* or paths approved towards transcendence; after this (‘*atha*’) comes *bhakti*.⁷³ This implies that once these qualities have been acquired *bhakti* manifests, thus there appears to be a cause to *bhakti*.

ii) However, given that the self-manifest nature of *bhakti* is a core philosophical tenet of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* theology, Kṛṣṇadeva is forced to admit that these corollary activities are not the exact causes of *bhakti* but rather the ‘*parampara*’ – distant cause. He shares an illuminating analogy to help the reader understand this idea. A practitioner of *jñāna* realizes *brahman* as coverings of ignorance are removed, leading one to *nirguṇa brahman*, although factually *brahman* is always self-manifest. Therefore, the *Upaniṣads* appear to claim that *jñāna* is the cause of *brahman* revelation, for instance, in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.1* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 3.8/6.15*, although it is simultaneously maintained that *brahman* is self-manifest. Similarly, Kṛṣṇadeva acknowledges that although *karma* can be accepted as a cause of *bhakti*, simultaneously it must be accepted that *bhakti* is self-manifest, and as such the efficacy of *karma* offered to the Lord is

⁷³ *kaivalyetyādi viśeṣaṅc ca ahaitukī hetuḥ vinaivotpadyamānety api na saṅgacchate, hetoḥ prabala-vacanaḥ suṣṭhu pratipādayitum ārabdhavāt* (Monika Horstmann, p.234)

rooted in the grace of those who are pure (who bestow *bhakti*).⁷⁴ As *bhakti* from the *bhaktas* is what actually causes *bhakti* in others.

iii) Continuing, Kṛṣṇadeva responds to Viśvanātha's interpretation of BP 11.12.9 and BP 3.29.11 as quoted in his commentary to BP 1.2.6, which both appear to emphasize that *nirguṇa-bhakti* or absolute *bhakti* cannot be caused by anything. In response, Kṛṣṇadeva quotes a series of verses beginning with BP 3.29.11 wherein Kapiladeva depicts the nature of *nirguṇa-bhakti*, and in particular a description of prerequisites such as prescribed duties, associating with *bhaktas*, worshiping the deity, and so on. Kṛṣṇadeva here argues that this passage which describes *nirguṇa-bhakti* promotes a synthesis of *karma* and *sādhana-bhakti* in the pursuit of *nirguṇa-bhakti*. He quotes HBV 11.534 to further strengthen this position.⁷⁵ Thus, in this context, *karma* can be considered a cause of *nirguṇa bhakti*.

iv) Viśvanātha also interprets *ahautiki* or 'causelessness' in BP 1.2.6, in the sense of generation. However, Kṛṣṇadeva states that Śrīdhara Svāmī indicates in his commentary to BP 1.2.6 that it rather means to be free from material motivations (*phala*).⁷⁶ Intriguingly, '*hetu*' can mean the cause (generation) and also the purpose (motivation). Kṛṣṇadeva supports Śrīdhara Svāmī's reading for obvious reasons, and so *karma* conducted without motivation is *ahautiki* (motivationless) and a legitimate reading of the verse.

⁷⁴ na ca bhakteḥ sva-prakāśatva-hāny-āpattiḥ, brahma-vid-āpnoti paraṃ tam eva viditvātimṛtyumeti nānyaḥ panthā 'yanāyetyādinā jñānasya brahmāvīrbhāva-kāraṇatve'pi yathā tatra tad-āvaraṇa-bhaṅgam ādāyaiva

kārya-kāraṇa-bhāvān na tasya sva-prakāśatva-hānis tathā tatrāpi bhakty-āvaraṇa-bhaṅge tātparyāt, bhakti-mātra kāmanayārpita-karmādeḥ sat-kṛpā-mūlakatvāc ca, sat-kṛpāyās ca sva-tantratvaṃ sva-rūpa-śakti-vilāsatvaṃ ca taiḥ svīkṛtam eveti (Monika Horstmann, p.234)

⁷⁵ yato bhaktir ity anena ca tādrśa dharmasyāpi śuddha-bhaktiḥ phalam iti mahānavirodhaḥ, nanu dāna-vrata-tapo-homa-karmādikaṃ jñānāṅga-bhūtāyāḥ sātvikyā eva bhakte kathaṃcid dhetur bhavatu, na tu nirguṇāyāḥ, yaṃ na sāṅkhyena yogena dāna-vrata-tapo'dhvaraiḥ, vyākhyā-svādhyāya-sannyāsaiḥ prāpnuyād yatnavān apīty ekādaśenoktir iti cen na, mad-guṇa-śrutimātreṇa mayi sarva-guhāśaye mano-gatir avicchinnā yathā gaṅgāmbhaso 'mbudhau, lakṣaṇaṃ bhakti-yogasya nirguṇasya hy udāhṛtam, ahaituky avyavahitā yā bhaktiḥ puruṣottama ityādy ukta-lakṣaṇāyā nirguṇāyā bhakter eva niṣevitānimittena sva-dharmaṇa mahīyasyetyādy ukta-sva-dharmādīnāṃ mad-dharmaṇo guṇair etaiḥ parisamśuddha āśayaḥ puruṣasyāñjasābhyeti śrutamātra-guṇaṃ hi mām ity anena janma-koṭi-sahasreṣu ity ādinā ca (Monika Horstmann, p.235)

⁷⁶ kāraṇatvokteḥ, na ca ahaitukīti kathaṃ saṅgacchateti, vācyam hetuḥ phalābhisaṃdhānaṃ tad-rahiteti śrīdhara-svāmī-prabhṛti-vyākhyānāt (Monika Horstmann, p.236)

v) BP 11.12.9⁷⁷ is an important verse for Viśvanātha who uses it to substantiate the proposition that *bhakti* is causeless and thus cannot arise from *karma*. To counteract this Kṛṣṇadeva argues that the term ‘*yam*’ in BP 11.12.9 is not specifically referring to *nirguṇa-bhakti* but rather to the *prema-bhakti* of the residents of Vṛndāvana⁷⁸ as proved by the verse immediately prior BP 11.12.8⁷⁹ and thus not to *nirguṇa-bhakti*. *Vṛndāvana-bhakti* is very difficult to attain, even in comparison to general *bhakti*. He also references *Bhakti-Sandarbha* 242 to lend further credence to this meaning of ‘*yam*’.⁸⁰ Therefore, as BP 11.12.9 is describing the difficulty in attaining *Vṛndāvana-bhakti*, and not general *bhakti*. It is inappropriate to quote this verse in this context in Kṛṣṇadeva’s view.

vi) Kṛṣṇadeva also addresses any contention regarding *karma* as a distant cause of *bhakti*, noted earlier. In BP 1.2.9, *dharma*, which is understood as *karma* in this context, is said to lead to *apavarga*, which generally translates to liberation. Kṛṣṇadeva states that according to Jīva Gosvāmī in *Prīti Sandarbha* 18, *apavarga* can also mean love for the Supreme. Thus, irrespective of whether it is a distant cause or not, offering *karma* to the Supreme can lead to *prema-bhakti*,⁸¹ the highest goal for *bhakti* practitioners.

In this section Kṛṣṇadeva provides a detailed response to Viśvanātha’s claim that *bhakti* is completely causeless and consequently *karma* cannot be a cause of *bhakti* as there is no cause. Kṛṣṇadeva strongly objects to this proposition in several ways and is adamant that *karma* can be

⁷⁷ *yam na yogena sāṅkhyena dāna-vrata-tapo 'dhvaraiḥ vyākhyā-svādhyāya-sannyāsaiḥ prāpnuyād yatnavān api* (Even though one engages with effort in the sāṅkhya system, yoga, charity, vows, penances, sacrifices, teaching of Veda, self-study of the Vedas, or renunciation, still one cannot obtain me).

⁷⁸ *nanu yaṁ na sāṅkhyenetyādy ekādaśoktiḥ kā gatiḥ iti ced gatiḥ spaṣṭaiva rājate, tathā ca yaṁ iti yat pada-vācyo bhāva eva na tu sāmānyato nirguṇa-bhakti-yogaḥ* (Monika Horstmann, p.236)

⁷⁹ *kevalena hi bhāvena gopyo gāvo nagā mṛgāḥ ye 'nye mūḍha-dhiyo nāgāḥ siddhā mām iyur añjasā*

(Indeed, the cowherd women, cows, mountains, animals, other entities with stunted intelligence, and snakes all achieved perfection by love for Me and thus very easily achieved Me.)

⁸⁰ *tathaiva saṅdarbhaḥ yaṁ bhāvam atrāpi yogādayo bhagavat-parā eva, yogādibhir yatnavān apīty anena tat-prāpty arthaṁ prayujyamānatvāvagamanāt ity ādikaḥ* (Monika Horstmann, p.237)

⁸¹ *atra bhagavad-arpita-karmāder bhāvaṁ prati yat kāraṇatvaṁ niṣiddhaṁ tat tu sākṣād eva, paraṁparayā tu dharmasyāpavārgyasyety ādau tat-samarpitam asti yathā prīti-saṅdarbhe, tad evaṁ śrīmat-prīter evāpavargatvam ity ādi* (Monika Horstmann, p.237)

accepted as a cause of *bhakti*, curiously he simultaneously admits it must also be acknowledged that *bhakti* is self-manifest. I will revisit and examine this conundrum later.

These three principal objections provide the basis for Kṛṣṇadeva's refutation to Viśvanātha's interpretation of BP 1.2.6. Just as Kṛṣṇadeva offered a corrective reading of an interpretation to a specific passage in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* that dismissed offered *karma* to be included in the category of *dāsyam*, we witness a similar rereading of an interpretation of a crucial verse from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, BP 1.2.6. He begins his analysis of this verse by providing commentaries on this verse from prominent teachers of the tradition that endorse his perspective. He then begins his refutation of Viśvanātha's interpretation of BP 1.2.6, offering a corrective reading on the verse by drawing on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* itself and statements by Śrīdhara Svāmī and Jīva Gosvāmī. He literally dismantles Viśvanātha's comments on the verse, refuting different elements of Viśvanātha's arguments which discredit the possibility of *karma* leading to *bhakti*. There are three principal concerns voiced by Kṛṣṇadeva: Viśvanātha's usage of BP 6.3.22 to define BP 1.2.6, which results in the complete exclusion of anything other than *bhakti-yoga* from being expressed as *para-dharma*; the claim that the term '*bhakti*' in BP 1.2.6 means *prema-bhakti*; and finally, Viśvanātha claim that *bhakti* is completely causeless. Each of these arguments stood in opposition to Kṛṣṇadeva's objective to establish the compatibility between *karma* and *bhakti*, and thus he attempts to systematically counteract these claims with substantial references.

In concluding his refutation, Kṛṣṇadeva states that in the same way his [Viśvanātha Cakravartī's] explanations to some verses are flawed and thus should be re-examined. He further states in contrast, Śrīdhara Svāmī's explanations of these passages starting with BP 1.2.6 '*sa vai puṁsām*' are accurate and should be followed.⁸² Once again Kṛṣṇadeva does not refer to Viśvanātha by name. Kṛṣṇadeva finally quotes a lengthy series of passages from Sanatāna, Jīva and Śrīdhara Svāmī to corroborate his stance that executing *karma* can lead to *bhakti*. Viśvanātha's rejection of *karma* and *varṇāśrama* in light of *bhakti* practice is evident in other places in his *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* commentary. His position has already been highlighted in his comments to BP 1.2.6 and 1.2.8. A similar standpoint is adopted in his reading of BP 1.5.17 (Having abandoned one's own *dharma* (*varṇāśrama*), worshipping Hari's lotus feet and in an immature stage happens to fall from that position, [be assured] nothing inauspicious will happen

⁸² *evam agre 'pi tatra tatra tad-vyākhyāyām atyanta-śaithilyam anusaṅdheyam, tasmāt sa vai puṁsām ity ādīnāṃ śrīdhara-svāmīyādy ukta-vyākhyānam eva samyak, prakṛtam anusarāmaḥ* (Monika Horstmann, p.238)

to him. However, what does one who does not perform worship but follows his own *dharma* [*varṇāśrama*] gain?⁸³), in this respect Viśvanātha states:

In BG 3.26 (One should not cause confusion to the ignorant who are attached to performing activities. A learned person should act as to engage them in all sorts of *karma*⁸⁴), an instruction is given not to abandon *karma*. Viśvanātha acknowledges this point but argues that the instruction pertains to one on the path of *jñāna* that relies on internal cleansing whereas *bhakti* is completely independent and powerful⁸⁵. To substantiate this view, he quotes BP 6.9.50 and BG 18.66, which indicate that one should abandon *varṇāśrama*, giving up *nitya* and *naimittika* duties and teach only *bhakti*.⁸⁶ He further adds that *karma* is prohibited even in the initial phase of *bhakti* practice⁸⁷ and provides reassurances of protection by referencing BP 11.5.41. He further states that even if one falls short of perfection or even deviates from the path of *bhakti* there is no calamity because the impressions generated by *bhakti* are imperishable and endure in a subtle shape.⁸⁸ Considering this, one should not return to the practice of *karma*. He further quotes BP 11.29.20 to support his argument. He claims that unfailingly *bhakti* will in the future sprout leaves, flowers and fruits⁸⁹,

⁸³ tyaktvā sva-dharmam caraṇāmbujam harer bhajann apakvo 'tha patet tato yadi yatra kva vābhadram abhūd amuṣya kiṁ ko vārtha āpto 'bhajatām sva-dharmataḥ

⁸⁴ na buddhi-bhedaṁ janayed ajñānām karma-sanginām, yojayet sarva-karmāṇi vidvān yuktaḥ samācaran

⁸⁵ iti śrī-gītopaniṣad-vākyena karma-tyājanam niṣiddham satyam taj-jñānopadeṣṭṛ-viṣayam eva jñānasyāntaḥ karaṇa-śuddhy-adhīnatvāt, tac-chuddhes tu niṣkāma-karmādhīnatvāt, bhaktes tu svataḥ prābalyād antaḥ karaṇa-śuddhi-paryantānapekṣatvāt, na bhukty-upadeṣṭṛ-viñayam

⁸⁶ ity ādi bhagavad-vākya-balān nitya-naimittika-sva-dharmaniṣṭhāyā api tyājanayaiva kevalaiva hari-bhaktir upadeṣṭavyety āśayenāha tyaktveti

⁸⁷ bhajanārambha-daśāyām api karmānuvṛttir niṣiddhā sva-dharmam tyaktvā yo bhajan syād amuṣyābhadram tāvan na bhaved eva

⁸⁸ ity āder yadi punar upakvo bhagavat-prāpty-ayogyo mriyeta jīvann eva vā kathamcid anyāsaktas tato bhajanāt durācāratayā vā patet, tad api karma-tyāga-nimittam abhadram na bhaved eva bhakti-vāsanāyās tv anucchitti-dharmatvāt sūkṣma-rūpeṇa

⁸⁹ śrī-bhagavad-vākyaād amogha-bhakty-ankurasyāvaśya-bhāvya-patra-puṣpa-phalāditvād iti bhāvaḥ

whereas there is no reward for one who performs their own *dharma*
but does not worship the Lord.⁹⁰

In this way, Viśvanātha discourages engagement in prescribed *karma*s declaring them to be futile and unnecessary for a *bhakti* practitioner, even if one is a novice or beginner *bhakta*. Considering Viśvanātha's disregard for the practice of *karma* for a *bhakta* according to these passages in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Kṛṣṇadeva was obliged to refute Viśvanātha's interpretations that jeopardized the promotion of *karma* and orthodox public conduct for members of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect. Verse BP 1.2.6 especially became significant in this period and was the focus of discussions on *karma-bhakti* relations, thus Kṛṣṇadeva was tasked with refuting Viśvanātha's reading of this verse which proved to be problematic in this period. Kṛṣṇadeva further explains:

The objection raised that *karma* is useless in [light of] the practice of *bhakti* is a misunderstanding of otherwise straightforward explanations. He also states that it is a flawed position as it contradicts scriptures such as *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*, *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī*, *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, the *Sandarbhā*s and so on. Furthermore, it contradicts the teachings of all *sampradāyas*, therefore such interpretations should be relinquished. On account of weakness and absence of evidence, for those who aspire after ultimate meaning should not provide any veneration to this (Viśvanātha's interpretation).⁹¹

Kṛṣṇadeva then quotes the *Mahābhārata (Vana-parva 313.117)* Viśvanātha Cakravartī's *Sārārtha-darśiṇī (maṅgalācaraṇa)*, Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary to BP 1.1.3 and Viśvanātha Cakravartī's *Sārārtha-darśiṇī* commentary to BP 2.1.8, to show the importance of following the teachings of the *sampradāya* and concludes by stating that even Vaiṣṇavas in order to teach pure *bhakti (suddha-bhakti)* should perform the activities prescribed in the *varṇāśrama-dharma*, in the

⁹⁰ abhajatām abhajaḍbhis tu sva-dharmataḥ ko vā artha āpto na ko'pīty arthaḥ

⁹¹ karmādinām sarvathā bhakty-aupayogitve tat tad-asangatvāpatti tathāpi āgraha-vaśāt, pūrvokta-vacana-jāteṣu kaṣṭha-kalpatayānyārtha-kalpanaṃ tu āñjasyābhāvāt, bhāvārtha-dīpikā-vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī-hari-bhakti-vilāsa-bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-sandarbhādi-grantha-virodhāt, sarva-sampradāya-virodhāt, śaithilyāt pramāṇābhāvāc ca pāramārthikair nādaraṇīyam (Monika Horstmann, p.255)

way taught by the Vaiṣṇava scriptures, like *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*.⁹² Thus, in his conclusion to this section Kṛṣṇadeva argues that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect's understanding of the function of *karma* in relation to *bhakti* should be derived from the statements of previous authorities within the *sampradāya*. Ironically, he quotes Viśvanātha twice when declaring this assertion, despite his extensive refutation of his teacher. He also references his predecessors such as Śrīdhara Svāmī, Sanatāna Gosvāmī and Jīva Gosvāmī while constructing his refutation. By invoking the authority of these previous teachers, Kṛṣṇadeva forcefully counteracts Viśvanātha's position stressing that the '*para-dharma*' of verse BP 1.2.6 can and does include *karma*, and that *karma* can and does certainly lead to *bhakti*.

Several key questions are raised considering this important passage in the *Karma-vivṛti*. For instance, why does Kṛṣṇadeva not mention Viśvanātha by name during his refutation of him. At no point does he identify Viśvanātha as the *purvapakṣa*, even whilst refuting his comments on this verse. In response to this question it is known that there is a code of ethics of scholarship traditionally followed and in this instance demonstrated by Kṛṣṇadeva in this endeavour. Kṛṣṇadeva refrains from naming his *pūrvapakṣa* as is *śāstric* convention. The practice of not naming the *pūrvapakṣa* is quite common, not only within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, but also in other traditional *śāstric* discussions. This etiquette of refutation has also been adopted by earlier teachers of the tradition. For example, in Ravi Gupta's book he discusses the model of etiquette Jīva Gosvāmī adopts when refuting Śrīdhara Svāmī at times.⁹³ In this case, we observe Kṛṣṇadeva refer to Viśvanātha explicitly when referring to him as a positive source of substantiation, however, when opposing him he abstains from naming him and concerns himself only with the challenging views.

Thus, I would suggest that despite the apparent conflict between teacher and student on this issue, there is no indication of deterioration in the reverence and relationship between the two, and indeed Kṛṣṇadeva accedes to many of Viśvanātha's other views on Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology, such as the principle that *bhakti* is ultimately self-manifest, although as discussed earlier their emphasis on this matter differs. Indeed, it is also noted by Adrian Burton that Kṛṣṇadeva wrote commentaries on several important texts authored by Viśvanātha, such as the

⁹² *dvitīya-skandhasya prathamādhyāye idaṃ bhāgavataṃ nāmety asya vyākhyāyām, adhītavān ity asya śāstrārtho buddhi-balena svayaṃ jñātum aśakya iti ca tasmād vaiṣṇavair api śuddha-bhakti-prati-pādanāya varṇāśrama-vihitāni karmāṇi vaiṣṇava-śāstroka-vidhinā kartavyānyeveti niṣkarṣaḥ, vaiṣṇava-śāstraṃ ca hari-bhakti-vilāsādi* (Monika Horstmann, p.257)

⁹³ Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta of Jīva Gosvāmī*, p.83

Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta, *Stavāmṛta-laharī* and *Sankalpa-kalpa-druma*⁹⁴ which in of itself illustrates the respect Kṛṣṇadeva had for Viśvanātha and his teachings. Furthermore, in Kṛṣṇadeva’s opening to the commentary to *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta* he describes Viśvanātha as follows: ‘May the jewel-like poem that indicates the qualities of the glorious Viśvanātha who is resplendent amongst the people in the court of the king of Vṛndāvana adorn the locket which is my mind. May this be awarded quickly, also the seed of good fortune is his glance.’⁹⁵ It is clear from such statements that despite the differences of opinion on *karma* and *bhakti*, Kṛṣṇadeva maintained the utmost respect for Viśvanātha.⁹⁶

Viśvanātha’s strong stance expressed in his *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* commentary begs the question as to why he was so vehemently opposed to the practice of *karma*. Furthermore, Kṛṣṇadeva in his formative years was a student of Viśvanātha’s why did he and Viśvanātha have contrasting views on this issue. It is important to recognise that these two authors were communicating to vastly different audiences and communicating within vastly different environments, which no doubt influenced their compositions. Viśvanātha was the leader of a *maṭha* of ascetics in Vṛndāvana and never left Vṛndāvana even when summoned by the king. He was reclusive by nature and more than likely his primary audience was similarly divorced from social involvement. Kṛṣṇadeva on the other hand, having spent a short period in Vṛndāvana with his teacher, later relocated to Jaipur and served in the administration of the king as an intimate aide. As such much of his work would have been influenced by the interests of the king whose concerns regarding social affairs are well documented.

Intriguingly, even though Kṛṣṇadeva vehemently argues that *karma* leads to *bhakti*, he acknowledges that *bhakti* is ultimately self-manifest or causeless. I explore this anomaly in further detail in the next section. Kṛṣṇadeva efforts therefore aim to denounce an irresponsible application of this principle whereby Vaiṣṇavas withdraw from the world to pursue uninhibitedly the practice of chanting and hearing about Kṛṣṇa abandoning their social responsibilities in the process. We can assume Kṛṣṇadeva considers such a view as dangerous because it would provide justification for unorthodox practices resulting in social disruption and spiritual degradation for

⁹⁴ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.74

⁹⁵ vṛndāṭavīśvara-sabhā-jana-rājamāna-śrī-viśvanātha-guṇa-sūcaka-kāvya-ratnam
mac-citta-samputam alaṅkuruṭām tad-īkṣā-saubhāgya-bījam api śīghram amūṃ
vidhattām

⁹⁶ Since the *Kṛṣṇabhāvanāmṛta* describes the activities between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, glorifying them. Śrī-Viśvanātha could also be read another way, possessing a dual meaning. Therefore, as well as meaning the ‘glorious Viśvanātha’, another meaning is ‘Śrī and the lord of the universe’, or Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

the general populace. This was a major concern for Jaisingh who was alert to the need for social stability and responsibility, as demonstrated by his reformation endeavors such as the construction of a colony known as *Vairāgyapura* intended to encourage wayward *sādhus* to adapt to a *grhastra* lifestyle.⁹⁷

Can Karma cause bhakti considering bhakti is self-manifest

As discussed earlier, Kṛṣṇadeva acknowledges that *bhakti* is self-manifest as established by Viśvanātha also and therefore does not essentially require *karma* or anything else for that matter to generate it. However, Kṛṣṇadeva also argues in support of *karma* claiming it leads to *bhakti* and thus is conducive and supportive for the aspirations of a *bhakti* practitioner. This apparent contradiction presented a dilemma for aspiring *bhaktas* who seek to reconcile the two processes in consideration of *bhakti's* self-manifest nature.

In examining this topic further I will explore a pivotal verse that is frequently shared to illustrate how *karma* can lead to *bhakti*. We observed this verse earlier in Viśvanātha's comments to BP 1.2.8 and BG 3.9. This verse is found in BP 11.20.11: 'In this very life situated in one's duty according to *varṇāśrama*, free from sin and pure, one obtains pure knowledge or by chance (*yadṛcchayā*) *bhakti* unto me'.⁹⁸ Thus, it appears from this verse that *karma* can indeed cause *bhakti*. Viśvanātha admits there is some truth to this but notes that the usage of the expression *yadṛcchayā* indicates 'by itself', and therefore concludes that *bhakti* is self-manifest and not even *niskāma-karma* (the purest form of action) is the cause of *bhakti*.⁹⁹ Therefore the term *yadṛcchayā* is of critical importance in explicating *bhakti's* self-manifest nature. This very expression also features in another verse slight earlier, BP 11.20.8, *yadṛcchayā mat-kathadau*, 'if somehow or other a person hears about me and so on.' The usage of the word *yadṛcchayā*¹⁰⁰ in both instances indicates that *bhakti* is independent, thus having no cause and for our purposes implies *karma* or one's pious acts cannot be the cause of *bhakti*.

⁹⁷ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.114

⁹⁸ *asmiml loke vartamānaḥ sva-dharma-stho 'naghaḥ śuciḥ jñānam viśuddham āpnoti mad-bhaktim vā yadṛcchayā*

⁹⁹ *yadṛcchā svairitety abhidhānāt kaṣṭa-kalpanayā vyākhyānantare bhakteḥ sva-prakāśatvaṃ na siddhed iti tad anādṛtam ity ato niṣkāmo'pi karma-yogo na bhakter hetur ity āha*

¹⁰⁰ For more information on the term '*yadṛcchayā*' consult: Johnathan B. Edelmann, "The Cause of Devotion in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Theology", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 135.1.49 (2015), p.53-55

Considering the causeless nature of *bhakti* as a fundamental notion within Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology, Kṛṣṇadeva is forced to acknowledge that *karma* is not the direct cause of *bhakti* in the *Karma-vivṛti*. However, he maintains it is a cause, albeit a 'distant cause'. He shares an example from the Advaita tradition to help the reader understand how *karma* and *bhakti* remain closely connected. According to the tradition a practitioner of *jñāna* realizes *brahman* by the removal of the coverings of ignorance which leads to *nirguṇa brahman*, although in reality *brahman* is self-manifest. Kṛṣṇadeva refers to key verses invoked by Advaitin teachers such as *Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.1* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 3.8/6.15*, these verses convey the function of *jñāna* in attaining *brahman* for the tradition. These verses suggest that by knowing *brahman* one attains *brahman*, for example, *Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.1* states:

One who knows *brahman* gains the highest there is. Truth, knowledge, the infinite is *brahman*, one who knows them hidden in the cave of the heart, in the highest heaven, attains all desires, along with *brahman*.¹⁰¹

And in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* both 3.8 and 6.15 states:

...Only by knowing him (*brahman*) can one transcend death, there exists no other path to go there.¹⁰²

Shankara the renowned Advaitin teacher in his comments to *Bhāgavad-Gītā* 18.66 helps us to further understand how *jñāna* plays a pivotal role in attaining *brahman* yet does not compromise *brahman's* independent nature. He begins by explaining that action and likewise the combination of knowledge and action is dismissed as a means to truth, and rather only exclusive knowledge leads to the highest truth. In response to a possible objection that even exclusive knowledge is purposeless, Shankara replies:

No. It destroys ignorance and is seen to conclude in liberation. Knowledge that destroys the darkness of ignorance is seen as concluding in the result of liberation. [Similarly] The result of the light of a lamp destroys the darkness of ignorance about the snake and so

¹⁰¹ brahma vid āpnoti param satyam jñānam anantam brahma yo veda-nihitam guhāyām so' śnute sarvān kāmān saha brahmaṇā vipaścitā

¹⁰² ...tam eva viditvāti mṛtyum eti nānyaḥ panthā vidyate 'yanāya

on, and the [darkness] from the object of the rope and so on. Indeed, the result of the light culminates in only the rope after the false notion of a snake and so on have disappeared. So is the case of knowledge.¹⁰³

This passage from Shankara reinforces the idea that knowledge only serves to remove ignorance and not to cause the manifestation of *brahman*. The example of the snake and the rope often features in Shankara's writings. In this analogy, the rope remains always present and the light of the lamp (knowledge) simply removes the darkness (ignorance) to unveil the rope's true nature, thus not mistaking it for a snake. Similarly, it is not that knowledge awakens *brahman* or manifests *brahman* but rather removes the dualities which are superimposed on the self by ignorance. The self, which is synonymous with *brahman* is ever present, just as the rope is present despite being mistakenly identified as a snake. Thus, it is not the knowledge of the scriptures or the revealed texts that leads to knowing the self or *brahman*, as it is already familiar and self-evident. Therefore, the objective of works such as the Upaniṣads, is not to familiarize one with one's own self, *brahman*, but simply to eradicate the fictitious dualities such as 'happiness and distress', 'love and hate', and so on that we misidentify with. *Neti Neti*, 'not this, not this' is a method of negation that is adopted within the Advaita tradition which illustrates the role of knowledge. Adopting this method, the Advaita practitioner is able to negate identification with all things of this world which are not Brahman and one continues to do so until nothing remains other than the self or Brahman. Ultimately the *Neti Neti* approach negates all descriptions of the absolute truth other than truth itself. By the example of the rope, although it is perceived vaguely however due to the darkness the image of a snake is superimposed upon it. And therefore, although there is the vague inherent understanding of the self, by removing the superimpositions one is able to develop complete and factual understanding.¹⁰⁴

Thus similarly, *karma* acts as an aid and is not the direct cause of *bhakti*. Earlier it was described that Jīva Gosvāmī references the example of BP 11.3.23 in his *Bhakti-Sandarbhā* to explain that the act of detaching the mind from matter of itself is not *bhakti*, however when

¹⁰³ kevalaṃ jñānam apy anarthakaṃ tarhi? na, avidyā-nivartakatve sati dr̥ṣṭa-kaivalya-phalāvasānatvāt | avidyā-tamo-nivartakasya jñānasya dr̥ṣṭaṃ kaivalya-phalāvasānatvam | rajjv-ādi-viṣaye sarpādy-ajñāna-tamo-nivartaka-pradīpa-prakāśa-phalavat | vinivṛtta-sarpādi-vikalpa-rajju-kaivalyāvasānaṃ hi prakāśa-phalam | tathā jñānam |

¹⁰⁴ For more on this topic consult: Swami Gambhirananda, *Mandukya Karika 2.32, Eight Upaniṣads*, (Calcutta, 1990), p.251-256. AND A.J. Alston, *Shankara on The Absolute*, (London,1980), p.115

employed in the pursuit of *bhakti* it is from one perspective considered non-different to *bhakti*. Similarly, *karma*, when offered to the Supreme, is transformed by the motivation of *bhakti* and classified as *āropa-siddhā* or *saṅga-siddhā*, which are valid forms of *bhakti* by Jīva. Although I will explore Viśvanātha’s commentary on the *Gītā* further in chapter five of this thesis, however, his comments on BG 7.28 are particularly insightful on this current topic. A literal reading of this verse BG 7.28 (In contrast, those persons who performed pious acts, whose violations of *dharma* have come to an end, they worship me with determination, being freed from delusion due to duality¹⁰⁵) suggests that pious acts or *karma* lead to *bhakti*. However, Viśvanātha clarifies in his comments that one should not commit the error of inferring from this verse that *karma* causes *bhakti*, nevertheless he illustrates the precise way in which *karma* is beneficial in the pursuit of *bhakti*, he states:

Then who are eligible for *bhakti*? Here it is said that those who execute pious acts, who have ended violations of *dharma* although not completely, this is the meaning. There is an increase of the qualities of *sattva* (goodness) and there is a decline in the qualities of *tama* (ignorance). When that is the case, delusion, which is its effect, that also declines. Indeed, when delusion declines, they are without excessive attachment, consequently by the spontaneous association of *bhaktas* they only worship me. They become completely free from sin by the constant practice of worship and so on. Those who by being freed from the remaining illusion become determined in vows, they gain steadiness in worshipping me, and thus, one should not think that only pious activity is the cause of *bhakti* which gives everything. [He then quotes BP 11.12.9] Even though one engages with effort in the *sāṅkhya* system, *yoga*, charity, vows, penances, sacrifices, teaching of Veda, self-study of the Vedas, or renunciation, still one cannot obtain me. It is explained in several places that pious acts and so on are dependent on pure *bhakti*, and not it’s cause.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ yeṣām tv anta-gatam pāpam janānām puṇya-karmaṇām te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā bhajante mām dṛdha-vratāḥ

¹⁰⁶ tarhi keṣām bhaktāv adhikāra ity ata āha yeṣām puṇya-karmaṇām pāpam tv antam gatam anta-kālam prāntam naśyad-avastham na tu samyak naṣṭam ity arthaḥ, teṣām sattva-guṇodreke sati tamo-guṇa-hrāsaḥ, tasmin sati tat-kāryo moho’pi hrasati, moha-hrāse sati te khalu atyāsakti-

In Viśvanātha's comments to BG 7.28, he stresses that *karma* should not be mistaken to be the cause of *bhakti*. However, he acknowledges that how pious *karma* may facilitate one on the path of *bhakti* accepting the literal truth of this verse (BG 7.28). He accomplishes this by postulating that *karma* performs a subsidiary role in attracting the association of *bhaktas*, which actually leads to *bhakti*. He indicates that there are inclinations and dispositions that are conducive to receive *bhakti* from the *bhaktas*, specifically those persons who imbibe a *sattvic* disposition. This tempts me to suggest that this viewpoint contrasts specific comments on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* made by Viśvanātha in his *Sārārtha-darśinī*, examined earlier in BP 1.2.6, BP 1.2.8 and BP 1.5.17. Within his elucidations on these *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* verses he appears to proclaim that there are no conditions required to obtaining *bhakti* and consequently, the function of *karma* is irrelevant and insignificant even at the very beginning of *bhakti* practice. Jonathan Edelman provides further insights in respect to Viśvanātha's stance in his article, 'The cause of devotion in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology':

There are some qualifications (*adhikāra*) for *bhakti*, but under the general category of *adhikāra* we might distinguish "genealogical-qualifications" for *bhakti* (e.g., *varṇa*, *āśrama*, *jāti*, *janma*, *puṇya-karma*, etc.), of which there are none, and "dispositional-qualifications" for *bhakti* (e.g., lack of excessive attachment, lack of excessive detachment), of which there are some.¹⁰⁷

Jonathan Edelman also refers to BP 11.20.8 which also indicates that an individual who attains *bhakti* spontaneously (*yādṛcchayā*) is 'not despondent and not excessively attached.' Therefore, we can extrapolate that there are certain qualities that are significant for a receiver of *bhakti* to cultivate, to be a fit recipient of *bhakti*. Therefore, the practice of *karma* is conducive for the

rahitā yādṛcchika-bhakta-saṅgena bhajante mātram, ye tu bhajanādy-abhyāsataḥ samyak naṣṭa-pāpās te mohena niḥśeṣeṇa muktā dṛdha-vratāḥ prāpta-niṣṭhāḥ santo mām bhajante, na caivam puṇya-karmaiva sarva-vidhāyā bhakteḥ kāraṇam iti mantavyam
(BP 11.12.9) yam na yogena sāṅkhyena dāna-vrata-tapo 'dhvaraiḥ vyākhyā-svādhyāya-sannyāsaiḥ prāpnuyād yatnavān api. iti bhagavad-ukteḥ, kevala-bhakti-yogasya punyādi-karmāśrayam naiva kāraṇam iti bahuśaḥ pratipādanāt

¹⁰⁷ Edelman, "The Cause of Devotion", p.61

manifestation of these qualifying attributes for a practitioner, and can therefore be considered an important element to receive *bhakti*, although not necessarily essential and certainly not the direct cause.

So, then what is the direct cause? In Viśvanātha's commentary it is said that *bhakti* is bestowed by the *bhaktas*, who operate as vessel carriers of *bhakti*. Alluding to the same point Kṛṣṇadeva also suggests that the effectiveness or potency of *karma* is dependent upon the grace of those who are pure¹⁰⁸, referring to the pure *bhaktas*. A similar proposition is outlined by Viśvanātha who offers the following comments to BG 3.2 (You seem to bewilder my intelligence with your mixed instructions. Therefore, speak one thing, having decided how I can attain a better condition.¹⁰⁹):

O my friend Arjuna, it is true that *bhakti* which is beyond the *guṇas* (goodness, passion and ignorance) is best of all. However, since that (*bhakti*) is gained by the mercy of my great, unalloyed *bhakta* by chance, it is not attained through human exertions. Therefore, the blessing is given to you, transcend the *guṇas* by transcendental *bhakti* unto me. When you see the result of this blessing, then you will attain by the mercy of my unalloyed *bhakta* by chance, however now you are only eligible for action¹¹⁰.

It is clear from the above passage¹¹¹ that this spontaneous arousal of *bhakti* is dependent upon receiving compassion from a sincere *bhakta*. In other words, *bhakti* arises from the grace of a

¹⁰⁸ *bhakti-mātra kāmanayārpita-karmādeḥ sat-kṛpā-mūlakatvāc ca, sat-kṛpāyāś ca svatantratvaṃ sv-rūpa-śakti-vilāsatvaṃ ca taiḥ svīkṛtam eveti* (Monika Horstmann, p.234)

¹⁰⁹ *vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena buddhiṃ mohayasīva me tad ekaṃ vada niścitya yena śreyo 'ham āpnuyām*

¹¹⁰ *bho vayasya arjuna satyaṃ guṇātītā bhaktiḥ sarvotkṛṣṭaiva, kintu sā yādṛcchika-mad-aikāntaika-mahā-bhakta-kṛpaika-labhyatvāt purusodyama-sādhyā na bhavati. ata eva nistraiguṇyo bhava guṇātītayā mad-bhaktiyā tvam nistraiguṇyo bhūyā ity āśīrvāda eva dattaḥ, sa ca yadā phaliṣyati tadā tādrśa-yādṛcchikaikāntika-bhakta-kṛpayā prāptām api lapsyase, sāmprataṃ tu karmaṇy evādhikāras te iti*

¹¹¹ In this verse BG 3.2, Viśvanātha's comments suggest that Arjuna is recommended to practice *karma* for now as he is not qualified to practice *bhakti*. This contrasts Viśvanātha's earlier comments that *bhakti* can be practice from the very beginning. However, later in the chapter in respect to BG 3.26, Viśvanātha explains that the stipulation to not disturb those who are attached

bhakta, and therefore the grace of a *bhakta* appears to be the actual cause of *bhakti*. However, to counteract this claim and to maintain the causeless status of *bhakti*, Viśvanātha states in the *Mādhurya Kādambinī*:

(BP 11.2.46) The intermediate *bhakta* exhibits love for the Lord, friendship to those that depend on the Lord, compassion to the innocent and neglects the envious. So, the intermediate *bhakta* exhibits partiality and because the Lord is obedient to His *bhakta*, his compassion follows the compassion of His *bhakta*, there is nothing improper in this. Now, the cause of the compassion of a *bhakta* is *bhakti* itself existing within his heart. As without this, there is no possibility of the appearance of compassion. Thus, *bhakti*'s own manifestation (self-manifestation) is certainly established. [Thus, only *bhakti* causes *bhakti*].¹¹²

In this way, Viśvanātha explains how *bhakti* maintains its causeless characteristic, as *bhakti* is responsible for causing itself. So, if this is the case, what function does the practice of *karma* have, if any? To answer this question, I will examine the three classes of *bhaktas*, namely, the neophyte, the intermediate, and the advanced (*prakṛta*, *madhyama*, and *uttama*)¹¹³. Neophytes are rarely inspired to give *bhakti* to others. Rather they are self-centered, concerned primarily with their own advancement. In contrast, the vision of the *uttama-bhaktas* is so elevated that they see

to action is in regard to the practice of *jñāna*. However, in respect to *bhakti* which is independent and strong, and is not dependent on the purity of heart, if it is possible for you to produce faith in *bhakti* then you may even disrupt those attached to *karma*. For those who have faith in *bhakti*, they have no necessity to perform *karma*. (bhaktes tu svataḥ prābalyād antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi-paryantānapekṣatvāt | yadi bhaktau śraddhām utpādayituṃ śaknuyāt, tadā karmināṃ buddhi-bhedam api janayet, bhaktau śraddhāvatāṃ karmānadhikārāt) He also quotes four verses to verify his position - BP 11.20.9, BP 11.11.32, BG 18.66, BP 1.5.17. Viśvanātha's perspective on BG 3.26 resembles his position displayed in BP 1.2.6, BP 1.2.8 and BP 1.5.17 outlined earlier.

¹¹² (BP 11.2.46) prema-maitrī-kṛpopekṣā yaḥ karoti sa madhyamaḥ iti madhyama-bhakta-vaīṣamyasya vidyamānatvād bhagavataś ca sva-bhakta-vaśyatvena tat-kṛpānugāmi-kṛpatve na kiñcid asāmañjasyam, yato bhakta-kṛpāyā hetur bhaktasyaiva tasya hṛdaya-vartinī bhaktir eva, tāṃ vinā kṛpodaya-sambhavābhāvād iti bhakteḥ sva-prakāśatvam eva siddhām (Mādhurya Kādambinī, prathamā vṛṣṭiḥ [first shower], verse 6)

¹¹³ Described in BP 11.2.45-47

everyone, even non-devotees, as fully engaged in *bhakti*; therefore, they feel no need to express their compassion. The distribution of *bhakti* is therefore typically regarded as the domain of the intermediate *bhaktas* as illustrated in the *Mādhurya Kādambinī* passage. The intermediate *bhaktas* engage with others through careful discrimination; they love the Supreme, make friendships with the *bhaktas*, avoid the envious and give the opportunity for *bhakti* to the innocent. For this reason, some persons receive *bhakti* and others do not. However, as Viśvanātha clarifies, *bhakti* itself causes compassion in the intermediate *bhakta*, who is then empowered to bestow *bhakti* upon the innocent. Who then is considered ‘innocent’, becomes a crucial question. The term used to denote the innocent is *balīśa* which can also mean ‘naïve’, ‘simple’ or ‘child-like’. The ‘*sattva* qualities’ of the recipient qualifies him or her to be considered amongst the ‘innocent’ and as described earlier the adoption of *karma-yoga* helps to bring an individual to this state. Therefore, based on this analysis although *bhakti* is self-manifest and independent, pious activities or *karma* allow one to cultivate and manifest a *sattvic* disposition, this enables one to be a fit receiver of the *madhyama bhakta*’s grace who are carriers of *bhakti*. Therefore, in consideration of how *bhakti* is transmitted *karma* plays a critical role in leading to *bhakti*.

Conclusion

In this period, we notice a significant development within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, which attempts to address the concerns regarding the practicality, accessibility and authenticity of its ideals within the public sphere. In other words, attention is given to how a *bhakti* practitioner operates in the public arena, this is likely to have been escalated by the political influences of the day. In response, several significant texts such as the *Karma-vivṛti* emerge to promote a system of integration or interaction with the socio-political circumstances of the time.

In the *Karma-vivṛti*, Kṛṣṇadeva establishes the function and benefit of the practice of *karma* in the pursuit of *bhakti*, arguing authoritatively that *karma* offered to the Supreme is itself a form of *bhakti*. He substantiates this conclusion by drawing on references from the most prominent teachers in the tradition’s lineage, and authoritatively providing corrective readings of key passages crucial for the promotion of *karma*’s value within the practice of *bhakti*. Alongside a key passage in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 1.2.6 proves to be a critical verse for Kṛṣṇadeva that exemplifies the potential synthesis of *karma* and *bhakti*, and he undertakes great lengths to propagate this view, even to the extent of refuting his own guru and teacher from Vṛndāvana. Viśvanātha on the other hand seems to offer a more accommodating position on *karma* for the *bhakti* aspirant in his *Gītā* commentary. His early thoughts presented through specific verses examined in his commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* appear to dismiss in no

uncertain terms any question of *karma*'s utility on the path of the *bhakti* practitioner. However, in his later commentary on the *Gītā*, he unveils an apparent alternate stance toward *karma*, accommodating its role and value for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practitioner. This is also evident in his presentation of *karma* as an intermediary purificatory path in the pursuance of *bhakti* as described in BG 3.2. I will explore Viśvanātha's stance on *karma* further in his *Gītā* commentary in Chapter five.

A significant tenant of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology, which both Viśvanātha and Kṛṣṇadeva agree on, is the notion that *bhakti* is ultimately self-manifest. This precept dismisses the idea that *karma* can be a direct cause of *bhakti*, nevertheless upon further examination I established that the practice of *karma* plays a crucial function in preparing one to be a fit recipient of *bhakti* via the benevolent *madhyama-bhaktas*. From this perspective *karma* practice can be considered intrinsic to the development of *bhakti*. Continuing our exploration of *karma-bhakti* relations, in the following chapter, I will investigate the jurisdiction of *karma* for a *bhakti* practitioner and the function of notions such as *lokasaṅgraha* in determining one's obligation to engage in *karma*. I will examine these themes primarily through the work of *Karmādhikāra-nirnaya* which is another critical text on *karma* commissioned by Jaisingh in this period.

CHAPTER 4 - *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* - Determining the jurisdiction of *Karma*

Introduction

Jaisingh II's reign was marked by religious reforms, reflected in the religious court debates he hosted. The employment of *brahmins* and the production of specialized works, all contributed in realizing his vision of statecraft constructed upon the pillars of *dharma*. Jaisingh was an extremely active and effective political ruler, who not only built his very own city but also contributed significantly to the major discourses of his time. He was also an author and composer of several texts himself including a commentary on the *Brahma-sutra*, known by several names, the *Tattvārtha-dīpikā*, the *Brahma-sūtra-vivṛti* and the *Brahma-bodhinī*. The focus of the last chapter, the *Karma-vivṛti* of Kṛṣṇadeva surfaced in this context. Jaisingh's influence in the production of this text, is self-evident, as observed by the dedication of the work to the king by Kṛṣṇadeva in the introduction to the text. This exposition is testament to the mounting reexamination of the role of *bhakti* in light of the orthodox reforms initiated by the king, revolving around his interest in *karma*. Kṛṣṇadeva's *Karma-vivṛti*, a presentation exemplifying the orthodox stance of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school was not the only contribution from the sect in this period. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* was also compiled to elaborate on the topic of *karma-bhakti* relations. Although the authorship of the text is ambiguous,¹ it is listed as having been caused by Jaisingh the king himself, indicative of its significant utility in this period.²

Through our examination of *Karma-vivṛti*, I explored the compatibility of both *karma* and *bhakti* and the function of *karma* in consideration of the independent position of *bhakti*. I also investigated how Kṛṣṇadeva and Viśvanātha agree to varying degrees that *karma* offers a beneficial function in the life of a *bhakta*. I also examined Kṛṣṇadeva's position on this matter in

¹ In Bahura's catalogue it is listed under the title *savāyi jayasimha-kāritā granthāḥ* or works caused by Jaisingh. Although some texts listed here were authored by Jaisingh, hence it is plausible that it was composed by the king, yet it is also possible that this text was authored by a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scholar possibly Kṛṣṇadeva even, considering his close connection to the court. However, no explicit authorship is indicated in the text.

² In the list of works connected to Jaisingh, links to Rāma feature frequently, indicative of Jaisingh's early devotion to Rāma. Later, his devotional inclination appears to switch to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa perhaps due to his association with Vraja and the Gauḍīya sect, in his role as the Governor of Mathura and Agra. (Bahura, *Literary Heritage of the Rulers of Amber and Jaipur*, p.62)

contrast to Viśvanātha and highlighted specific differences. Despite the differences, Kṛṣṇadeva and Viśvanātha are however in complete agreement as to the ultimate role of *karma* in relation to *bhakti*; for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, *karma* will never be the objective; at most it can only be a stepping stone or gateway to *bhakti*.³ This raises several critical questions which I will explore in the course of this chapter. Considering that the two paths are compatible, what ultimate obligation does a *bhakti* practitioner retain in following rules pertaining to *karma* and *varṇāśrama* practices, if any? At what point can or should *karma* be abandoned? If the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava perspective on *karma* had an expiration point then it would suggest that there is no consciously developed public theology or public responsibility other than adopting *karma* until one is eligible to abandon it and subsequently engage in *bhakti*. Therefore, it appears that complete devotion to Kṛṣṇa would be antithetical to engagement in worldly and public life. Exploring these topics will help us to further understand the extent to which public engagement was considered necessary for members of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community. In this chapter, I will examine these themes and questions primarily through the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* which is an exposition on determining the jurisdiction of *karma*. The text is predominantly a composition of references from principle Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava works. Considering that identical references appear in the *Karma-vivṛti*, I will also draw on this text intermittently offering further relevant insights to key issues raised. I will also examine the critical theme of *śraddhā* or faith and analyze its pivotal role in determining the jurisdiction of *karma* for a *bhakti* practitioner. In light of the transcendent status of *bhakti* in relation to worldly affairs I will also examine notions like *lokasaṅgraha* or responsibility to public welfare and the function of behavioral and moral norms promoted by saints and scriptures, and the subsequent impact these factors had on the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community's engagement in the public sphere in this period.

In this chapter, I will trace the main themes that populate the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, the title – ‘determining the jurisdiction of *karma*’ reflects the overarching theme that the text attempts to expand upon. The first part of the text presents three significant perspectives on this subject. The views of Śrīdhara Svāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī (through the interpretive lens of Jīva

³ Kṛṣṇadeva: *ṛṭīyaṃ ca tasya dvayasyaiva dvāra-bhūtaṃ karmārpaṇa-rūpam iti* (and the third [karma] is that which acts as a gateway to the other two [jñāna and bhakti], which is of the form of offering action). (Monika Horstmann, p.221)

Viśvanātha: *tatra api bhakti-yogasya atirahasyatvāt ubhaya-sanjīvakatvena abhyarhitatvāt sarva-durlabhatvāt ca madhyavartī kṛtaḥ* (Bhakti is placed in the middle between karma and jñāna because it is mysterious, difficult to attain, more honoured because it gives life to the other two.) (Statement found in the introduction to his Gīta commentary)

Gosvāmī) and Sanātana Gosvāmī are offered. The early portion of the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* strives to illustrate that these respected Gaudiya Vaisnava authors concur in their view that ‘firm faith’ or ‘mature faith’ in *bhakti* empowers one to transcend the authority of modes of conduct determined by the scriptural injunctions pertaining to *karma* whereas one possessing ‘weak faith’ in *bhakti* remains under the jurisdiction of *karma*. Having established this truth, the text proceeds to establish how even though one may have attained mature faith and thus is theoretically beyond the jurisdiction of *karma*, nevertheless still maintains an obligation to conform to moral and behavioral norms set out by age-old saints. This applies especially to one who is a socially engrossed active member of the public community. Subsequently such a person’s responsibility to abide by the commands of *varṇāśrama* extends to being an exemplar for the sake of other constituents within his social environment, inspired by the notion of *lokasaṅgraha*. The text also outlines guidelines to reassure *bhakti* practitioners, that despite the mandate to partake in worldly conduct defined by *karma* and *varṇāśrama*, nevertheless they can sustain their progress in *bhakti* without impediment. The text aspires to illustrate that *bhakti* and *karma* practices can coexist under specific conditions, without it conflicting with the pure status of *bhakti* practice as one advances. Hence, there is an overwhelming effort in the text to promote the status of *karma*, symptomatic of the concerns over suitable public engagement stemming from the political pressures in this period.

Is the adoption of *karma* and *varṇāśrama* necessary for a *bhakti* practitioner?

Having examined the compatibility of *karma* and *bhakti* and outlined how the practice of *karma* can lead to *bhakti*, I will analyze *karma-bhakti* relations further and investigate whether a *bhakti* practitioner has any *obligation* to follow the rules pertaining to *karma*, as it relates to the *varṇāśrama* system. In other words, is the practice of *karma* with all its social responsibilities in terms of one’s *varṇa* and *āśrama* inescapable for one striving on the path of *bhakti*?

The following two verses, feature in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and appear to indicate that there is no fundamental obligation. The verses are derived from the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, where in Rūpa Gosvāmī states (BRS 1.2.63-64):

One qualified for *bhakti* is at fault for not executing the limbs of *bhakti*.
However, they are not at fault for not performing their *karma*. Due to
destiny, they may (even) engage in some forbidden activity, (however)

there is no atonement required for them. This is the opinion of those who know the mystery of Vaiṣṇava scriptures.⁴

These two verses emphatically stipulate that a *bhakti* practitioner has no obligations in terms of prescribed *karma*, although obligations exist for the practice of *bhakti*. Furthermore, even if they commit some sin, no separate atonement is necessary, *bhakti* itself is sufficient to purify one. These statements relegate the significance of practices like *karma*. To substantiate his proclamation further, Rūpa Gosvāmī quotes passages from the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* and the *Bhagāvad-Gīta* such as BP 1.5.17, BP 11.11.32, BP 11.5.41 and BG 18.66. These passages all propagate the notion that one who has neglected prescribed *karmas* defined by *varṇāśrama-dharma* but who has nevertheless taken complete refuge of Kṛṣṇa on the path of *bhakti* need have no fear of incurring sin. This series of verses from Rūpa Gosvāmī presents compelling evidence to suggest that engagement in *karma* is not required for one who has initiated the practice of *bhakti*. Inevitably, this would be a cause of concern for a ruler such as Jaisingh who was seeking endorsement for orthodox forms of public engagement such as *karma* from sects within his domains.

It is worth highlighting that BRS 1.2.63-64 appears in the concluding section of the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* which delineates the eligibility for *sādhana-bhakti* and the moral responsibilities of a person who has attained this state. These verses highlight that one must in all circumstances not fail to practice *bhakti*, however if they fail to adhere to injunctions ordained by *varṇāśrama*, that on the other hand is permissible. It is also stressed in this section that if they inadvertently are compelled to violate ethical principles, *bhakti* is sufficient in and of itself to rectify the encroachment. Proceeding BRS 1.2.63-64, verses 65-71, are referenced to further display the potency of *bhakti* in enabling morality and stressing that no separate endeavor is required. These statements illustrate *bhakti's* self-sufficient nature and consequently a practitioner does not require any other purificatory process as *bhakti* is the most effective cleansing method. These verses highlight that *bhakti* is the greatest purifier, therefore even if a practitioner engages in forbidden acts they need not do anything other than partake in *bhakti* for reformation. The verses also illustrate *bhakti's* superior status over other paths, stressing that for one who is eligible for

⁴ *anauṣṭhānato doṣo bhakty-angānām prajāyate, na karmaṇām akaraṇād eṣa bhaky-adhikāriṇām, niṣiddhācārato daivāt prayaścittam ca nocitam iti vaiṣṇava-sāstrāṇām rahasyam tad-vidām matam* (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, MS 2669, Kashmohor collection, Pothīkhānā, City Palace, Jaipur, p.5b) and (Monika Horstmann, p.265)

pure *bhakti*, adopting or maintaining the performance of the practices of *karma* and *jñāna* and neglecting to execute *bhakti* are erroneous. Therefore, engaging in *bhakti* absolves one from the necessity to abide by the rules, practices and prohibitions pertaining to *varṇāśrama*.

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.63-64 along with other such passages which will be explored in this chapter, presented a challenge for governing bodies concerned with public engagement. This apparent disregard for social conventions and obligations proved problematic for the smooth running of Jaisingh's governance, and subsequently he inspired the production of works such as the *Karma-vivṛti* and the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* in response to this mounting challenge. Jaisingh was therefore the catalyst for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition's sudden preoccupation with the theme of *karma* and its integration with *bhakti* practices. This sudden interest in *karma* indicates a definite shift in theological concerns taking place at this time, accentuated if not directly invoked by a religious king concerned with public matters. I will examine how such specialized works as the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* assisted the king in his reformation endeavors. In the opening remarks to this work, its purpose is delineated as a systematic inquiry into whether *varṇāśrama* is prescribed for the *bhaktas* of the Lord.⁵ The text itself is primarily a selection of quotes from the leading teachers of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, particularly Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary on the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa*, the *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*, but also venerated authors such as Jīva, Rūpa, and Sanatāna Gosvāmī, who were the foremost teachers of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect after Caitanya's departure.⁶ Focusing primarily on the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, I will formulate hierarchies illustrating relations between *karma* and *bhakti* according to authoritative references. The hierarchies will highlight the obligation a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *bhakta* has towards the practice of *karma*, which as I will illustrate contrasts the earlier mentioned passage in BRS 1.2.63-71.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava authorities reveal that *karma* and *varṇāśrama* are compulsory for a *bhakti* practitioner of 'weak faith'

Śrīdhara Svāmī

The first hierarchy is conceived from Śrīdhara Svāmī's comments on a series of passages from the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa*, highlighting the limits of *karma*. *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* shares a pivotal verse on *karma* which frequently appears in this work and even the *Karma-vivṛti*,⁷ and is considered

⁵ atha śrī-bhagavad-bhaktānāṃ varṇāśrama-vihita-karmādhikāro nāsti iti vicāryate (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.1a)

⁶ etad eva bhagavac-chrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-mahāprabhū-saṃpradāyācārya-śrī-sanātana-rūpa-jīva-gosvāminām api abhimataṃ (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.3a)

⁷ (Monika Horstmann, p.257 & p.270)

fundamental in defining the jurisdiction of *karma*: BP 11.20.9 ‘One should perform *karma* as long as one is not disgusted or until faith in hearing my narrations and so on arises.’.⁸ This verse explains that faith and exhaustion in material pursuits qualify one to relinquish prescribed *karmas*. Elucidating on the import of this statement, *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* references Śrīdhara Svāmī’s position on this verse to highlight that the faith referenced in this verse is of a very specific type, that is namely ‘firm’ faith⁹. In his comments to BP 11.20.9 Śrīdhara Svāmī firstly refers to a later verse BP 11.20.28 where in the expression ‘firm conviction’ is utilized.¹⁰ He then explains that one who has such firm faith or conviction as illustrated in these verses possesses a confidence that everything will happen automatically by virtue of his practice of *bhakti*¹¹. The implication is that attaining this state, with an unshakable dependence on and conviction in *bhakti*, prescribed *karmas* can be discarded. *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* then features a series of comments from Śrīdhara Svāmī on specific verses that reaffirm this viewpoint, for instance, his comments on BP 11.11.32¹², BG 18.66¹³ and BP 1.5.17¹⁴. In this way, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*,

⁸ tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvatā māt-kathā-śravaṇādaḥ vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate iti

⁹ dṛḍha-śraddhā

¹⁰ atra śraddhā-pādena dṛḍha-śraddhā eva prāptvāpy agre śraddhāluḥ dṛḍha-niścaya iti ukteḥ vyākhyātāṃ ca śrīdhara-svāmi-caraṇaiḥ (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.1a)

¹¹ bhaktyaiva sarvaṃ bhaviṣyati iti dṛḍha-niścayaḥ sant iti (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.1a)

¹² BP 11.11.32 (evaṃ ājñāyāvaṃ guṇān doṣān mayādiṣṭān api svakān | dharmān santyajya yaḥ sarvān mām bhajeta sa ca sattamaḥ) In this way, ‘Knowing thus the virtues and faults which are taught by me, one who gives up all dharmas and one who would worship me is the best.’

Śrīdhara Svāmī on BP 11.11.32 (atra mad-bhaktyaiva sarvaṃ bhaviṣyati iti dṛḍha-niścayena eva dharmān santyajya yadvā bhakti-dārḍhyena nivṛttādhikārata yā santyajya iti)

Here it means that dharma is abandoned only with the firm conviction that by devotion to me everything will happen, or else [dharma is abandoned] because one’s eligibility (to perform karma) has disappeared due to one’s firmness in bhakti. (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.1b)

¹³ BG 18.66 (sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja...) ‘Abandon all dharma and go to me alone, the ultimate refuge’

Śrīdhara Svāmī on BG 18.66 (atra mad-bhaktyā eva sarvaṃ bhaviṣyati iti dṛḍha-viśvāsena vidhi-kainkaryāṃ tyaktvā iti) (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.1b)

Here servitude to injunctions is abandoned by firm trust that by devotion to me everything will happen

¹⁴ BP 1.5.17 (tyaktvā sva-dharmam caraṇāmbujaṃ harer bhajann apakvo ‘tha patet tato yadi yatra kva vābhadram abhūd amuṣya kiṃ ko vārtha āpto ‘bhajatām sva-dharmataḥ)

Abandoning one’s own dharma while one is worshipping the lotus feet of Hari, if an immature [person], may fall from that then where would there be inauspiciousness of that person? What gain is obtained for those who do not worship from their own dharma.

establishes by employing the writings of Śrīdhara Svāmī, that the command of *karma* ends when one attains firm faith. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* then presents an interesting claim, the text extrapolates that Śrīdhara Svāmī's usage of phrases such as 'by the firmness of *bhakti*' and 'relishing *bhakti*' indicates firm faith (*dṛḍha-śraddhā*), which is synonymous with the term 'mature faith' (*prauḍha-śraddhā*).¹⁵ This proposition is significant as we discover in various contexts varying expressions are utilized to denote 'firm' or 'mature' faith; however according to the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* these terms are simply synonyms.

Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya then proceeds to delineate Śrīdhara Svāmī's comments on BP 11.20.8 which describes in detail the jurisdiction of *karma* according to one's faith in *bhakti* further, Śrīdhara states:

(BP 11.20.8 commentary) In the later chapter it will be described that one engaged in *kāmya-karma* (acts for fulfilling one's own desires) is under the full authority of [scriptural] prohibitions and injunctions. However, those qualified for *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* (dutiful execution of one's duty without attachment for the result) only follow injunctions and prohibition according to their ability and the authority of injunctions and prohibitions extends only until one is qualified for *jñāna-yoga* or *bhakti-yoga* and for those the authority is very weak. However, for those who have achieved perfection by these [*jñāna* or *bhakti*] then obligation is nothing at all [and are not under the domain of injunctions and prohibitions at all].¹⁶

This important reference from the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* outlines systematically at what stage prescribed *karmas* can be abandoned, thus detailing the extent of the jurisdiction of scriptural injunctions pertaining to *karma*. *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* also adds that the prohibitions and

Śrīdhara Svāmī on BP 1.5.17 (atra bhakti-rasikasya karmāṇadhikārāt iti vyākhyātaṃ)

Here it is explained due to absence of the authority of karma for those who are relishing devotion. (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.1b)

¹⁵ bhakti-dārḍhyenety asya bhakti-rasikasya iti asya ca prauḍha-śraddhāparaparyāya-dṛḍha-śraddhāyāṃ tātparyam (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.1b)

¹⁶ tatra kāmya-karmasu pravartamānasya sarvātmanā vidhi-pratiṣedhādhikāra ity uttarādhyāye vakṣyati, niṣkāma-karma-yogādhikāriṇas tu yathā-śakti sa ca jñāna-bhakti-yogādhikārāt prāk eva, tad adhikṛtayoḥ tu svalpāḥ, tābhyāṃ siddhānāṃ tu na kiṃcid iti (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.1b & 2a)

injunctions that are mentioned in Śrīdhara Svāmī's passage belong exclusively to the *karma-kāṇḍa* and not the *jñāna-* and *bhakti-kāṇḍa*.¹⁷ Thus, clarifying for the reader that this commentarial passage from Śrīdhara is in relation to *karma*.

Combining together Śrīdhara's comments to BP 11.20.8 and BP 11.20.9 as presented in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, one can infer that those who have achieved perfection by *jñāna* or *bhakti* possess firm faith, which enables them to relinquish injunctions pertaining to *karma* and subsequently by not adhering to the rules and prohibitions of *karma*, neither benefit nor fault is attained. Once again, we observe that the key factor to determining the jurisdiction of *karma* is the level of faith one has gained, therefore the extent to which one's faith is weak, to that degree one is obliged to execute the rules and regulations pertaining to *karma*. Consequently, when one's faith becomes firm, that obligation no longer remains. Considering faith's pivotal role, weak faith can also be understood to be the cause for one being under the jurisdiction of *karma*, and in contrast firm faith is the cause of freedom from the authority of *karma*. Kṛṣṇadeva also examines the same passage from Śrīdhara in the *Karma-vivṛti*. Both the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and the *Karma-vivṛti* offer clarifications on these passages through their respective commentaries. In the *Karma-vivṛti*, Kṛṣṇadeva further states that this passage from Śrīdhara regarding the authority of injunctions and prohibitions pertaining to *karma* relates to only *nitya* and *naimittika-karmas*, which must be offered to satisfy the supreme, and therefore even if one is obliged to perform acts of *karma* one is required to avoid *kāmya-karma* acts,¹⁸ which are more selfish in orientation. I have summarized the points explored in a hierarchical table below:

<u>Nature of Action</u>	<u>Faith in Bhakti</u>	<u>Material Detachment</u>	<u>Authority of Scriptural injunctions (Karma)</u>
<i>Kāmya-karma</i>	Weak	Weak	Strong
<i>Niṣkāma-karma</i>			Determined by level of <i>Niṣkāma</i>

¹⁷ tatra vidhi-pratiṣedhau karma-kāṇḍoktau eva teṣām abhimatau (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.2a)

¹⁸ tathā ekādaśe| nivṛttaṃ karma seveta pravṛttaṃ mat-parah tyajet ity atra svāmi-vyākhyā ca| ataḥ pravṛttaṃ kāmyaṃ karma tyajet| nivṛttaṃ nitya-naimittikam eva kuryād,

Thus, in the 11th (Book), (BP 11.10.4), one should perform nivṛtti acts, one who is dedicated to me should abandon pravṛtti acts, and in Sridhara Svāmī's commentary (on this verse), it is recommended that one abandon pravṛtti acts, kamyā-karma and only perform nivṛtti acts, nitya- and naimittika-karma. (Monika Horstmann, p.219)

Qualified to practice <i>Jñāna</i> or <i>Bhakti</i> . [Otherwise only executes <i>Nitya</i> and <i>Naimittika karmas</i>]			Weak
Perfected by <i>Jñāna</i> or <i>Bhakti</i>	Strong	Strong	None (Proof: BG 18.66, BP 11.18.28)

After elaborating on this passage from Śrīdhara Svāmī on BP 11.20.8-9, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* proceeds to reinforce Śrīdhara Svāmī’s perspective by employing similar supportive statements from the principal teachers in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, namely Jīva Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanatāna Gosvāmī.¹⁹

Before sharing the views of these influential teachers on *karma-bhakti* relations, it is worth offering a synopsis of the position of Śrīdhara Svāmī in relation to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect. This insight clarifies why it was deemed appropriate to refer to his writings from the offset. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and the *Karma-vivṛti* stress the significance of Śrīdhara Svāmī’s teachings, often presenting their principle ideas based upon his teachings. This is a trend also observed in other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava works. Although a renunciate of a Śankarite order, Śrīdhara Svāmī is often revered in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition as the original commentator of the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa*, upon which other teachers constructed and formed their ideas, consequently, Śrīdhara Svāmī is held in high esteem within the tradition. His *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* commentary is a foundational treatise for the leading teachers of the tradition, and his interpretations effectively became the basis for the tradition’s understanding of the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa*. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Kṛṣṇadasa Kavirāja narrates an encounter between Caitanya and a Vaiṣṇava named Vallabha Bhaṭṭa, the founder of the Puṣṭi *mārga*, which reveals Caitanya’s deep appreciation and reverence for Śrīdhara Svāmī’s commentary, the *bhāvārtha-dīpika*. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 3.7.97-99, the Vaiṣṇava Vallabha Bhaṭṭa claims to have refuted the explanations of Śrīdhara Svāmī as his explanations were inconsistent and thus cannot be accepted as authoritative. Caitanya, troubled by Vallabha’s attitude, remarked that he likened anyone who did not accept the authority of Śrīdhara Svāmī to a prostitute.²⁰ This comparison is used by Caitanya to stress the significance of respect and chastity for predecessor teachers; just as

¹⁹ etad eva bhagavac-chrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-mahā-prabhū-saṃpradāyācārya-śrīsanātana-rūpa-jīva-gosvāminām api abhimataṃ (*Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, p.3a)

²⁰ Based on Dimock; Stewart, *Caitanya caritāmṛta*, p.877

traditionally a woman was meant to only be devoted to one man, her husband, similarly a *bhakta* was expected to display fidelity to predecessor teachers. The double meaning of the term ‘Svāmī’ is cleverly utilized here, which can translate to master or husband, Caitanya here exploits the dual meaning of the expression. According to Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, Caitanya herein establishes the undisputed position of Śrīdhara Svāmī for the followers of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism as an authoritative teacher. Śrīdhara Svāmī’s Advaitin affiliation was not a problem for Caitanya, who was himself initiated into a Śankarite order of renunciates. Jīva Gosvāmī also states in the *Tattva-Sandarbhā* (27) that Śrīdhara was a pure Vaiṣṇava who accommodated Advaitin ideas only to benefit the members of his school. In other words, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition’s view is that Śrīdhara Svāmī presented ideas broadly enough in order to entice followers from the Advaitin tradition, however in reality he was considered to be a stalwart Vaiṣṇava.²¹ Therefore, considering the exalted position of Śrīdhara Svāmī within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* invokes the views of the venerated teachings of Śrīdhara Svāmī in the first instance, and then proceeds to explain that this stance is also similarly espoused by the leading Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachers.

Jīva Gosvāmī

The second hierarchy I will articulate from the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* is derived from Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and specifically Jīva Gosvāmī’s views on Rūpa’s statements. The BRS 1.2.16-19 states as follows:

(16) There are three types of persons qualified for *bhakti*: the highest, the intermediate and the lowest. (17) In this respect, the highest is expert in logic and scripture and has firm conviction in all circumstances. That person has mature faith and is considered to be the highest in *bhakti*. (18) The intermediate *bhakta* is not expert in scriptures but does however possess faith. (19) The third and lowest level is characterized by weak faith and is known as the *kaniṣṭha*.²²

²¹ Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaisnava Vedanta*, pg. 67

²² *uttamo madhyamaś ca syāt kaniṣṭhaś ceti sa tridhā | tatra uttamaḥ | śāstre yuktau ca nipuṇaḥ sarvathā dṛḍha-niścayaḥ | prauḍha-śraddho ’dhikārī yaḥ sa bhaktāv uttamo mataḥ || atha tatra madhyamaḥ | yaḥ śāstrādiṣv anipuṇaḥ śraddhāvān sa tu madhyamaḥ | atha kaniṣṭhaḥ | yo bhavet komala-śraddhaḥ sa kaniṣṭho nigadyate* (*Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, p.4a)

On this passage, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* offers an extensive commentary primarily referring to Jīva Gosvāmī's comments. Of particular interest is the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*'s focus on the type of faith possessed by the *madhyama* or the intermediate *bhakta*. In the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Rūpa states that the intermediate *bhakta*'s faith is described as *śraddhāvān* or one who possesses faith. *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* states that according to Jīva Gosvāmī he who has mature faith, *prauḍha-śraddhā*, appears in both the intermediate and the highly advanced *bhaktas*.²³ The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* declares this by referring to Jīva Gosvāmī comments to BRS 1.2.17, which state that the *uttama bhakta* possesses *prauḍha-śraddhā* or mature faith,²⁴ and in verse BRS 1.2.18 the intermediate devotee is described as *śraddhāvān*, which according to Jīva can be taken to mean he is firmly convinced or *drḍha-niścayaḥ*.²⁵ I discussed earlier that *drḍha-niścayaḥ* (firm conviction) and *prauḍha-śraddha* (mature faith) are identical from the perspective of *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*. Therefore, *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and crucially Jīva reveal that the *uttama* or highest *bhakta* and the *madhyama* or intermediate *bhakta*, possess faith that is mature and firm in conviction respectively and thus from the perspective of *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* they are identical in respect to faith, even though these two individuals are distinguished into separate categories by Rūpa Gosvāmī. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* does not regard the distinction between the *uttama* and *madhyama* to be determined by faith, rather, he suggests that the hierarchy or difference arises according to the ability to reconcile the contradictory conclusions of the scriptures.²⁶ In other words the highest (*uttama*) *bhakta* is able to refute all arguments and challenges and reconcile philosophical contradictions whereas the intermediate (*madyama*) *bhakta* may or may not be able to respond adequately to such confrontations however in respect to the degree of faith they are equal. Therefore, the intermediate *bhakta* is exempt from the jurisdiction of *karma* in the same way as the highest *bhakta* due to firm or mature faith, and only the *kaniṣṭha* remains under the jurisdiction of *karma*. *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* therefore claims that as long as one's faith is weak or as long as one remains in the category of a *kaniṣṭha*, there will be some obligation to *karma*.²⁷ Therefore, of the different *bhaktas* described by Rūpa

²³ atra madhyamasyāpi prauḍha-śraddhatvam asti iti jñāpitam (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.4b)

²⁴ evaṃ bhūto ya iti prauḍha-śraddha viśeṣaṇena prauḍha-śraddhāntarasūcanāt (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.4b)

²⁵ śraddhāvān manasi drḍha-niścaya evety arthaḥ (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.4b)

²⁶ tathāpi tāratamyam tayo balavad-bādha-samādhāna-sāmarthyāsāmārthya kṛtam eva (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.5a)

²⁷ tasmād yad-avadhi śraddhāyāḥ kaumalyam tad-avādhi kaniṣṭhatvam kiñcit karmādhikāraś ca etādṛśa-lakṣaṇaka-kaniṣṭhādhikāriṇaḥ (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.5a)

Gosvāmī, it is only the lowest or *kaniṣṭha bhakta* that is obliged to follow injunctions pertaining to *karma*. These passages and perspectives are outlined in the second hierarchical table below:

<u>Category of Bhakta</u>	<u>Faith in Bhakti</u>	<u>Authority of Scriptural injunctions (Karma)</u>	<u>Expertise in Logic and Sastra</u>
<i>Kaniṣṭha</i> (Lowest)	Weak (<i>komala</i>)	Strong	Weak
<i>Madhyama</i> (Intermediate)	Firm conviction (<i>dr̥ḍha-niścayaḥ</i>)	None	Medium
<i>Uttama</i> (Highest)	Mature faith (<i>prauḍha</i>)	None	Strong

By employing Jīva Gosvāmī's interpretation of Rūpa Gosvāmī's widely known distinctions of *bhaktas*, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* is able to postulate that it is only the *madhyama* and *uttama* that are eligible to abandon rules pertaining to *varṇāśrama* or *karma*. This compliments Śrīdhara Svāmī's position on this matter. It is evident from these two perspectives that there is a responsibility to follow injunctions pertaining to *karma* if one's faith in *bhakti* is weak or not firm, symptomized by his attraction to material temptations, and the lack of scriptural understanding. This presents somewhat of a contradiction considering that earlier in this chapter I shared BRS 1.2.63-64²⁸ as found in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, this passage implies that a *bhakta* once embarking on path of *bhakti* is exempt from the jurisdiction of *karma* and therefore does not incur sin in neglecting the performance of *karma*. BRS 1.2.63-64 appears to conflict with the claim that a novice on the path of *bhakti* or one who possesses weak faith in *bhakti* is still governed by injunctions pertaining to the practice of *karma*. If this passage in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* is accepted literally it contradicts the aforementioned hierarchies and stands in opposition to the interpretation proposed in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*. Furthermore, in BRS 1.2.63-64 it is evident

²⁸ ananuṣṭhānato doṣo bhakty-aṃgānāṃ prajāyate | na karmaṇāṃ akaraṇād eṣa bhakty-adhikāriṇāṃ|| niṣiddhācārato daivāt prayaścittam ca nocitam | iti vaiṣṇava-sāstrāṇāṃ rahasyaṃ tad-vidāṃ matam ||

A person eligible for *bhakti* is at fault for failing to execute the important limbs of *bhakti*. However, they are not at fault for failing to perform their *karma* (*prescribed duties of varṇa and āśrama*). If they, by destiny/chance, happen to engage in some forbidden activity, there is no atonement prescribed for them. This is the opinion of those who know the secret of the Vaiṣṇava scriptures.

that the grammatical plural form (not the single or dual cases) for the expression ‘for persons qualified for *bhakti*’ (*bhakti-adhikāriṇām*) is employed. Therefore, this implies that this refers to not only the *uttama-adhikārīs* and *madhyama-adhikārīs*, but also to the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs*, and if not understood in this way then the usage of the plural case makes no sense. Therefore, this exemption from *karma* also applies for the *kaniṣṭha*, otherwise the dual form would have been alternatively used. However, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* in response adeptly utilizes Jīva Gosvāmī’s commentary on BRS 1.2.16-19 to argue that it is only the *uttama* and *madhyama* who are eligible to be exempt from *karma*. Thus, when the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* refers to the series of verses found in BRS 1.2.63-71 which describe that a *bhakta* is not at fault if he abandons *karma* or *dharma*, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* maintains its stance, and stipulates that BRS 1.2.63-71 characterizes one who has mature faith.²⁹ However, the problem remains as to why a plural form is used rather than the expected dual form in this case. To address this anomaly, Kṛṣṇadeva in the *Karma-vivṛti* claims that in BRS 1.2.63 the expression ‘persons qualified for *bhakti*...’ is in the plural form to demonstrate the great glory of those with firm faith, or in order to show them respect³⁰ and not to declare that all *adhikārīs* are exempt from the jurisdiction of *karma*. Therefore, considering such statements could have been misconstrued, in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* we witness great efforts to ensure that this portion of the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* is not misunderstood to support the intentional abandonment of one’s responsibilities pertaining to *varṇāśrama* prematurely. Thus, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* stresses that exemption from codes of conduct in relation to *varṇāśrama* only apply to those that have attained mature faith such as the *madhyamas* and *uttamas*.

Sanatāna Gosvāmī

The final perspective on this subject is derived from a passage from Sanatāna Gosvāmī’s *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*³¹ to further substantiate the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*’s proposition that one with weak faith is governed by *karma*. Sanatāna Gosvāmī states the following in his *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (11.10-11):

²⁹ atrāpi pūrṇa-śaraṇāpaty-ādi-lakṣaṇaiḥ prauḍha-śraddhatvam eva vyaktī-kṛtaṃ (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.6a)

³⁰ bhakty-adhikāriṇām ity atra bahutva-nirdeśas tu prauḍha-śraddha-bhaktānām mähātmyādhikyād ādareṇa vā teṣām eva (Monika Horstmann, p.267)

³¹ Although the authorship of this work is contentious, some suggesting it was Gopal Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, however considering that the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* refers to the author of the work as Sanatāna Gosvāmī I do the same throughout this thesis.

Having elaborated on *karma* since a *bhakta* with weak faith (*mṛdu-śraddhā*³²), who is not fully mature, is still governed by some *karma*. [Whereas] there is never a fall down for a *bhakta* with mature faith, for such a *bhakta* is not under the domain of *karma*. This will be written/described later on.³³

Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya states that this statement appears in a section of *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* concerning the elimination of the jurisdiction of *karma*, he then refers to a series of passages within *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* beginning with BP 11.20.9,³⁴ which illustrates for whom *karma* practices are irrelevant. This section of *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, derived from the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* first outlines who is under the jurisdiction of *karma* and subsequently outlines who is not, and provides proof of the removal of the obligation by referring to various works. Thus, this passage in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (11.10-11) reinforces the notion that a *bhakti* practitioner with weak faith is obliged to follow the injunctions pertaining to *varṇāśrama* and declares only those with mature

³² A peculiarity that is worth a brief consideration is that rather than the term *komala-śraddhā*, ‘tender faith’ which we are familiar with as employed to describe the *kaniṣṭha bhakta*, or the lowest type of *bhakta* in Rūpa Gosvāmī’s BRS 1.2.16-19, instead here we observe that one possessing weak faith is described using the expression *mṛdu-śraddhā* or ‘soft faith’. This is the chosen expression Sanatāna opts to use. One could therefore contend that according to BRS 1.2.63 the *kaniṣṭha* who possesses *komala-śraddhā* is also exempt from the practice of *karma* and it is rather the *mṛdu-śraddhā bhakta* who is bound by *karma*. In response to this contention, Kṛṣṇadeva states that *komala-śraddhā*, ‘tender faith’ and *mṛdu-śraddhā* ‘soft faith’ are synonyms and argues that there is not any evidence that there is any difference between a person with tender faith (*komala-śraddhā*) and a person with soft faith (*mṛdu-śraddhā*). [*prauḍha-śraddhānām ity evārthaḥ saṃgacchate mṛdu-komalayoḥ paryāyatvāt, mṛdu-śraddha-komala-śraddhayor bhedo pramāṇābhāvāt* (Monika Horstmann, p.265) Thus, Kṛṣṇadeva by equating *mṛdu-śraddhā* and *komala-śraddhā* dismisses the proposition that the *kaniṣṭha bhakta* transcends the authority of *karma*. Therefore, both Rūpa, Jīva and Sanatāna are consistent in their presentations of the lowest level of *bhaktas* and their obligation to *karma*.

³³ *tatra śrī-sanātana-gosvāminām yathā hari-bhakti-vilāse mṛdu-śraddhasya bhaktasya prauḍhatām anupeyuṣaḥ kiṃcit karmādhikāritvāt karmāsyaitat prapañcitam prauḍha-śraddhasya bhaktasya karmasv anadhikārataḥ pātityam na bhavaty eva lekhanīyaṃ tad-agrata itī* (*Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, p.3a) (Monika Horstmann, p.259)

³⁴ *agrataḥ bhakteḥ karmādhikāras nirasana-prakaraṇau, tatha karmādhikāra-nirasanaṣṭvam, HBV (11.553) (BP 11.20.9) tatra eva tāvat karmāṇi kurvatetyādi* (*Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, p.3a)

or firm faith are exempt from the jurisdiction of *karma*. This passage advocates a similar stance to that witnessed in the accounts of Śrīdhara Svāmī and Jīva Gosvāmī in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* explored earlier. This *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* passage also features in Kṛṣṇadeva’s *Karma-vivṛti* in which he comments that such a person with weak faith who fails to execute *nitya* and *naimittika karma* incurs *karmic* reactions when acting in this world, whereas a *bhakta* with mature faith leaves no *karmic* footprint when acting in this world. He submits BG 18.66³⁵ and BP 11.18.28 as further proof of this.³⁶ In this way, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* also refers to Sanatāna Gosvāmī’s *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* to reiterate that until one achieves mature faith in *bhakti*, one is obligated to follow rules and regulations pertaining to the *varṇāśrama* social system, as depicted in this table:

<u>Faith in Bhakti</u>	<u>Authority of Scriptural injunctions (<i>Karma</i>)</u>
Weak (<i>mṛdu</i>)	Strong
Mature faith (<i>prauḍha</i>)	None (BG 18.66 and BP 11.18.28)

In summary, *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* references Sanatāna Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī and Jīva Gosvāmī to display consistency with the teachings of Śrīdhara Svāmī on this particular issue. *Karma-vivṛti* also provides helpful clarifications on these exact references, indicative that these two texts were possibly composed in conjunction, with possibly the authors in dialogue or even produced by the same author. Furthermore, considering Kṛṣṇadeva’s position as the theological consultant to the king, it is likely that they had numerous dialogues on this topic and these works may have been produced as a result of such discussions. Whatever the precise nature of the authorship, through the explanations offered I was able to formulate three hierarchies, illustrating *karma-bhakti* relations determined by faith. The first hierarchy was primarily based on comments by Śrīdhara Svāmī on BP 11.20.8-9, the second hierarchy was derived from Jīva Gosvāmī’s comments on Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.16-19 and the final hierarchy is developed from a reference from the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 11.10-11. Through these perspectives as well as clarifying the jurisdiction of *karma*, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* also

³⁵ This also provides clarification to Sanatāna’s comments to BG 18.66 mentioned in the opening of the former chapter, consequently Sanatāna’s comments to BG 18.66 are only applicable for those who have reached the stage of mature faith.

³⁶ *tasmāt komala-śraddhasyādhikā-prāptatvāt tad-akaraṇe pratyavāyo bhavātīti tasyāvaśyakam eva nitya-naimityaka-karaṇam, prauḍha-śraddhasya tu nirapekṣasya karmādhikārāt pratyavāyo na bhavaty eveti tam uddīśyaiva svarūpataḥ karma-parityāgo vihito 'stīl sarva-dharmān parityajyeti mad-bhakto vānapekṣaka ity ādinā* (Monika Horstmann, p.260)

endeavors to provide clarifications to the contentious passages in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.63-71. Thus, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* provides a rationalization that would thwart misinterpretations leading to the deliberate or premature neglect of one’s obligations pertaining to *varṇāśrama*. The composition argues vehemently that immunity from prescribed *karma* practices only relate to those that have realized mature faith. Thus, it is abundantly clear from this exposition that until one attains firm conviction or mature faith one is obliged to follow the injunctions of *karma*. In a community consisting of members with varying degrees of faith, this would have been a critical benchmark to determining the extent of one’s social obligations, thus becoming a vital tool for configuring social order and responsibility. In the course of this analysis, *śraddhā* or faith emerges as the pivotal factor determining the expected level of one’s public responsibility and specifically mature or firm faith is identified as the prerequisite that enables one to forsake *karma*. Considering the fundamental role of *śraddhā*, I will explore *śraddhā* further in the following section. In the preceding chapter, it was also described that Viśvanātha claimed that it is only by grace stemming from the *bhaktas* that can bestow such *śraddhā*, therefore in the next section, I will also examine in more detail the relationship between *śraddhā* and such grace.

The role of Śraddhā or faith

Śraddhā is commonly depicted to convey faith or conviction. In the Oxford English dictionary, faith is defined as complete trust or confidence in someone or something. In the framework of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literatures, what is that someone or something? In other words, what is the focus of *śraddhā* or where does *śraddhā* repose itself? To begin answering this question I will refer to a pivotal verse that has appeared on numerous occasions in various places in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and the *Karma-vivṛti*. In the eleventh book of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Kṛṣṇa instructs Uddhava that ‘one should perform action (*karma*) until faith in the hearing of my narrations, and so on arises’,³⁷ this verse delineates the jurisdiction of *karma*. Faith, in this context, is denoted in relation to a particular activity, specifically hearing narrations about Kṛṣṇa and comparable activities. We see a similar pattern in other verses of the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* and the *Gītā*, where the object of faith is a sacrifice or hearing of Kṛṣṇa or praising Kṛṣṇa and so on. It is often described that each of these activities should be executed with *śraddhā*, hence the term

³⁷ tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvatā mat-kathā-śravaṇādau vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate (BP 11.20.27-28)

frequently appearing in the instrumental case.³⁸ Rembert Lutjeharms in his article, 'Śraddhā in Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Thought' comprehensively analyzes śraddhā within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition explaining:

Śraddhā in different times and contexts has had and will carry different meanings, however in Caitanya Vaiṣṇava thought it generally refers to—as Jan Gonda puts it— 'the performer's active, positive and affirmative attitude towards religious acts, his belief in the transcendental effects of the ritual performance and the effectiveness of the rites.' Though *śraddhā* often implies an acceptance of certain theological views, nevertheless within Caitanya Vaiṣṇava writings it is primarily ascetical or ritual in character and more concerned with practice than doctrine.³⁹

In other words, we observe within Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava writings the object or target of *śraddhā* is primarily a precise action or mode of living, and secondarily doctrinally orientated works. The primary role of *śraddhā* is similarly echoed in the core texts of the tradition and the writings of the foremost theologians of the tradition. Now that the object of *śraddhā* has been identified, I will explore the multiple levels of *śraddhā* in relation to such activities as presented in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava writings.

Earlier in this chapter I established that there are different levels or degrees of *śraddhā*. Two types of faith in particular were outlined, *komala-śraddhā* or weak faith (or *mṛḍu-śraddhā*) and *dṛḍha-śraddhā* or firm faith, also known as *prauḍha-śraddhā* or mature faith. The *komala-śraddhā* is the faith that is possessed by a *kaniṣṭha bhakta*, in other words the faith of a novice on the *bhakti* path. This is described in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.23.5 where it is stated that if by some fortune some *jīvas* have faith then those *jīvas* associate with holy men.⁴⁰ In the same way Rūpa Gosvāmī describes that one begins with initial faith, which then leads to the association of saints...⁴¹ in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.4.15-16. In contrast, firm or mature faith is the mode

³⁸ Rembert Lutjeharms, "Śraddha in Caitanya Vaisnava Thought", *ISKCON Studies Journal* 2, (2014), p.82-83, 97

³⁹ Lutjeharms, "Śraddha in Caitanya Vaisnava Thought", p.73

⁴⁰ kona bhāgye kona jīvera 'śraddhā' yadi haya tabe sei jīva 'sādhu-saṅga' ye karaya (CC 2.23.5) p.707

⁴¹ adau śraddhā tatha sadhu-sango...

of faith acquired by the *madhyama* and *uttama bhaktas*, which qualifies them to transcend the jurisdiction of *karma*. The mental disposition of one who possesses mature faith contrasts one possessing initial faith, marked by the resolute conviction that a specific practice will lead to perfection. This is outlined succinctly in the well-accepted definition of *śraddhā* proposed in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.22.37, which describes that the word *śraddhā* or faith denotes a very profound belief that if one performs *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti* all *karma* is [automatically] performed.⁴² This resembles the definition also offered by Śrīdhara Svāmī as presented several times in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*. In this respect Śrīdhara Svāmī equates one who has firm faith with the ‘firm conviction that by *bhakti* alone all will be accomplished’.⁴³ Śrīdhara Svāmī refers to this exact expression in his comments to BP 11.20.9, BP 11.11.32 and BG 18.66 explored earlier. This provides some clarity to the precise nature of the faith that enables one to abandon *karma*, as opposed to a generic faith or the initial faith described. Considering Śrīdhara Svāmī’s repeated usage of this phrase and the fact that it appears later in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, one can infer that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition’s definition of firm or mature faith or conviction is derived from Śrīdhara Svāmī’s presentation on this matter.

Considering *śraddhā*’s definitive role in assessing the jurisdiction of *karma* for a *bhakti* practitioner, it is important to examine how such *śraddhā* in *bhakti* arises to begin with. We will observe connections between this discussion and the section in the previous chapter that examined the causeless nature of *bhakti*, where I resolved that *bhakti* is independent and induces advanced *bhaktas* to bestow it. Therefore, the *bhakti* initially granted includes the initial *śraddhā* or faith required to embark on the *bhakti* path, and enables one to attain the status of a *kaniṣṭha bhakta* or a novice *bhakta*. This faith is achieved by some good fortune as described earlier in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.23.5 and similarly in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* it is stated, ‘only by exceedingly good fortune does one acquire faith in service (to *Kṛṣṇa*) ...’⁴⁴. Furthermore, both Jīva and Viśvanātha commenting on this verse postulate that this fortune is specifically their ‘mental impressions arising from the association of great saints and so on.’⁴⁵ Therefore, it is evident from these statements that the source of this initial faith is contact with advanced *bhaktas* and it is this initial faith, or *komala-śraddhā* that qualifies one on the path of *bhakti* as a *kaniṣṭha-adhikāri*.

⁴² *śraddhā-śabde viśvāsa kahe sudṛḍha niścaya kṛṣṇe bhakti kaile sarva-karma kṛta haya* (CC 2.22.62), p.691

⁴³ *bhaktyaiva sarvam bhaviṣyati iti dṛḍha-niścayaḥ* (*Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, p.1a & 1b)

⁴⁴ *yaḥ kenāpy atibhāgyena jāta-śraddho’sya sevane ...* (BRS 1.2.14)

⁴⁵ *atibhāgyena mahat-saṅgādi-jāta-saṃskāra-viśeṣeṇa* (Jīva’s and Viśvanātha’s comments on BRS 1.2.14) Based on Luṭjeharms, “Śraddha in Caitanya Vaisnava Thought”, p.105

Having explored the arising of initial or weak faith, I will now explore how that faith transforms and evolves into the firm or mature faith possessed by the *madhyama* or *uttama bhakta*. This transition is described succinctly in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.23.6-9:

From the association with holy men listening and praising arises, and in *sādhana-bhakti* all evil is eradicated. From the eradication of evil is firmness in *bhakti*, and from firmness, the appetite for listening and the rest is born. And from these appetites comes deep attachment to *bhakti*, and from this attachment the sprout of love for Kṛṣṇa is born in the mind. When that bhava is deep, it has the name *prema*, that *prema* is the *prajojana*, the place of all bliss.⁴⁶

In this passage, the gradual progression of faith in *bhakti* is delineated, culminating in *prema* or love. Thus, in consideration of these verses and the statements explored so far in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, it would be tempting to suggest the following in respect to a *bhakta's* progression as one embarks and proceeds on the path of *bhakti*. Having attained the status of a *kaniṣṭha bhakta*, possessing weak faith, there is no alternative for such a *bhakta* than to adhere to scriptural injunctions pertaining to *karma* whilst patiently associating with advanced *bhaktas* whose grace will nourish the novice's faith further. At this point, it is essential for the *kaniṣṭha* practitioner alongside *sādhana-bhakti* to engage in *nitya* and *naimittika-karmas* and offer all his activities to the Supreme. In contrast, the *bhakta* who has attained mature faith may forego the encumbrances of *varṇāśrama* and engage only in *sādhana-bhakti*. Those with weak faith remain secure on the path of *bhakti* by simultaneously participating in the *varṇāśrama* system, while holding in mind *karma's* ultimate standing as subservient to *bhakti*. The *bhakta* should constantly

⁴⁶ *sādhu-saṅga haite haya 'śravaṇa-kīrtana' sādhanā-bhaktye haya 'sarvānārtha-nivartana | anārtha-nivṛtti haile bhaktye 'niṣṭhā' haya niṣṭhā haite śravaṇādye 'ruci' upajaya|ruci haite bhaktye haya 'āsakti' pracura āsakti haite citte janme kṣṇe prīty-aṅkura| sei 'bhāva' gāḍha haile dhare 'prema'-nāma sei premā 'prajojana' sarvānanda-dhāma (CC 2.23.6-9), p.707*

Similar references were provided in works like the BRS 1.4.15-16: *ādau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅgo 'tha bhajana-kriyā tato 'nārtha-nivṛtṭiḥ syāt tato niṣṭhā rucis tataḥ athāsaktis tato bhāvas tataḥ premābhyudañcati sādhakānām ayaṁ premṇaḥ prādurbhāve bhavet kramaḥ* First there is faith, and after that association with holy men, and then the performance of worship, and as a result of that the sloughing off of evil things, and when that happens *niṣṭhā* comes about, and then appetite, and then attachment, and then bhava, and then *prema* arises. This is the order in which *prema* gradually appears in the *sādhakas*. (CC 2.23. śloka 5-6), p.707

place at the forefront of his mind the eventual goal, namely *prema*, prerequisites such as *karma* though they may have some utility in realizing the goal, however must eventually be rejected. The specific utility of *karma* and *varṇāśrama* is that they invite the influence of *sattva* as described by Viśvanātha who acknowledged in his comments to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* that the practice of *karma* creates a conducive state of *sattva* that attracts the grace of the *bhaktas*.⁴⁷ By this reasoning following the injunctions pertaining to *karma* can be regarded as essential only for the *kaniṣṭha bhakta*.

According to the above findings, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* establishes that the foremost Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava authors agree that *karma* has a beneficial role in the life of a *bhakta*, and is indeed, mandatory for a *kaniṣṭha-bhakta*, yet it is also acknowledged that it can be abandoned upon the fruition of mature faith. If the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava viewpoint on *karma* ended here it would suggest that there is no consciously developed public theology or public responsibility other than adopting *karma* until one is qualified to abandon it and subsequently engage in *bhakti*. This would also suggest that complete devotion to Kṛṣṇa is antithetical to engagement in worldly and political life. Furthermore, there could never be a text that extols a perfect society, as perfection is ultimately to be found outside the world in Kṛṣṇa's presence. While this may still ultimately be true the remainder of this chapter deals with topics and themes that suggest there is more to consider on this matter. I will explore the obligation to scriptural injunctions pertaining to *karma* for those who have acquired mature faith, despite being beyond their authority. Can one with mature faith act in complete disregard of the social norms and conduct delineated by the injunctions and rules of *varṇāśrama*? This would have been a critical issue for a king who was striving for morality and religiosity amongst the members of his domains by employing *dharma*-based scriptures to provide guidelines and laws for the modes of orthodox living. Consequently, I will now turn to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theological perspective on moral expectations and the notion of *lokasaṅgraha* or acting for the welfare of the people of the world which appears to advocate a notion of public responsibility and engagement that transcends the level of faith attained.

Morality

Despite the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* illustrating that an individual possessing mature faith in *bhakti* is no longer bound by the jurisdiction of *karmic* injunctions, nevertheless the requisite for such an individual to operate within established moral and behavioral boundaries is stressed in a series

⁴⁷ See Viśvanātha comments to BG 7.28 as presented in the last chapter

of passages extracted from Jīva Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-Sandarbha* 172. This intriguing section revolves around a verse that features shortly after BP 11.20.8-9 discussed earlier, BP 11.20.27-28 conveys the following:

One who has awakened faith in the narrations about me, being disgusted with all acts. Although, he knows that sensual desires consist innately of suffering, he is incapable of relinquishing (them). Thus, he remains delightful, faithful and with firm conviction should worship me, whilst participating (in) sensual pursuits, which conclude in suffering, (in this state) he repents.⁴⁸

From our discussion of BP 11.20.8-9, the faith referred to in this section is mature faith and one having attained this type of faith is exempt from the jurisdiction of *karma*. Thus, BP 11.20.27-28 poses a significant challenge in the context of our discussions so far. The *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* insinuates that one with mature faith is absolved of sin if he transgresses the Vedic rules and regulations by engaging in *bhakti*, and it even suggests that religious misconduct, while regrettable, does not disqualify the sincere practitioner from the path of *bhakti*. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* highlights this verse to illustrate that such statements could potentially be misconstrued or even abused by unscrupulous persons who interpret them as endorsements for immoral behavior and practices. The antinomian⁴⁹ standing of those who are devoted yet scripturally under no obligation to obey society's ethical and moral stipulations was undoubtedly a critical concern for the *dharmic* king. This issue was perhaps exacerbated during the reign of Jaisingh when specific groups were accused of eroding the authority of governing bodies and established norms. In some cases, splinter groups that rejected the dominant teachings of sects in line with the king's rule were excommunicated. It is therefore evident that during the reign of Jaisingh a tension emerged between laws of good governance and the theological positions of popular traditions that permitted the transgression of such laws. BP 11.20.27-28 was not the only

⁴⁸ jāta-śraddho mat-kathāsu nirviṇṇaḥ sarva-karmasu veda duḥkhātmakān kāmān parityāge 'py anīśvaraḥ tato bhajeta mām pṛītaḥ śraddhānur dṛḍha-nīścayaḥ juṣamāṇaś ca tān kāmān duḥkhodarkāṁś ca garhayan (*Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, p.8b) (Monika Horstmann, p.269)

⁴⁹ The notion of Antinomianism entails the belief that sect members only required faith for salvation and not obedience to moral laws. This would occasionally lead to society members neglecting rules determined by social norms, resulting in uncontrollable and unpredictable behavior.

problematic passage in this regard as evidenced by the examination of BRS 1.2.63-64 earlier. Even the popular key *Gītā* verse of 18.66 proved contentious, as here Kṛṣṇa relieves one from all consequences to sin if they submit to him. Such verses are problematic because they could be manipulated by deceitful persons who aspired to justify their transgressions based on the fundamental notion that *bhakti* supersedes the necessity of orthodox modes of conduct or the adoption of elaborate atonement schemes. The possible danger of such an interpretation would culminate in the erosion of the efficacy of reprimands instigated by the king as a deterrent to such disruptive social practices. To counteract such dangers, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* refers to Jīva Gosvāmī who introduced precautionary measures to avoid misunderstanding passages like BP 11.20.27-28. Subsequently, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* draws on specific arguments that Jīva Gosvāmī shares in BS 172 to provide a corrective interpretation to such verses that counteracts theological rationalizations for engaging in unorthodox immoral conduct.

Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya referring to BS 172 highlights that multiple Vaiṣṇava works expect and emphasize abstinence from sinful acts for Vaiṣṇavas, for instance, *Viṣṇu-dharma* states: ‘One who breaks the limit created by him, that human being is not a *Viṣṇu-bhakta*, for Hari is worshiped with good deeds.’⁵⁰ In the same text, it is stated: ‘When he abstains from sins and desires piety, then Hari situated in his heart can be known by man’.⁵¹ It is also mentioned in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 3.8.14 ‘Keśava is greatly pleased with those who never think of enjoying other’s wives, other’s wealth, or harming others.’⁵² Thus, significant Vaiṣṇava works stress the necessity of avoiding the transgression of orthodox behavior for a Vaiṣṇava. Jīva intentionally refers to central Vaiṣṇava texts to reinforce his perspective, illustrating scripturally that the avoidance of sinful behavior is pleasing to Viṣṇu, and indeed, the pleasure of Viṣṇu is the ultimate aspiration for a *bhakta*.

The *Karma-vivṛti* also contributes to this discussion by further referring to Jīva Gosvāmī’s BS 172. Prior to BP 11.20.27-28, earlier in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is it said:

And here, [in this section of *Bhāgavatam*] such sinful enjoyments are also forbidden in the case of *niṣkāma-karma*, in the upcoming words (BP 11.20.10) ‘one shouldn’t do any activity other than one’s duty’ (It is

⁵⁰ viṣṇu-dharmeḥ maryādāṃ ca kṛtām tena yo bhinatti sa mānavaḥ | na viṣṇu-bhakto vijñeyah sādhu-dharmārcano harir iti (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.8b) (Monika Horstmann, p.271)

⁵¹ yadā necchati pāpāni yadā puṇyāni vāṃchati | jñeyas tadā manuṣyeṇa hr̥di tasya hariḥ sthitaḥ iti viṣṇu-dharma-niyamena ((Monika Horstmann, p.272)

⁵² para-patnī-para-dravya-para-hiṃsāsu yo matim | na karoti pumān bhūyaḥ toṣyate tena keśava iti viṣṇu-purāṇa-vākyādau (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.8b) (Monika Horstmann, p.271)

forbidden to perform even *kāmya* acts), for when it is prescribed to abandon *karma*, giving up bad activities is already assumed as this is worse.⁵³ It is also said in the same section, enjoyments [in this verse BP 11.20.28] are only those that don't create sins, because in all ways this is not endorsed in the scriptures in anyway.⁵⁴

In this way, Jīva further clarifies the nature of the 'enjoyments' referred to in BP 11.20.27-28, stressing the 'enjoyments' referred to cannot be sinful acts as this conflicts with the injunctions of scriptures which are not permitted whatsoever. What to speak of sinful acts, even acts such as *kāmya karma* which are acceptable according to the injunctions of scriptures are discouraged due to their self-centered nature.⁵⁵

Both the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and *Karma-vivṛti* turn extensively to Jīva Gosvāmī's *Bhakti Sandarbha* 172 to present alternative readings of BP 11.20.27-28⁵⁶, which otherwise could have contributed to jeopardizing expected moral and behavioral standards established in this era. This analysis highlights that even though Vaiṣṇavas possessing firm faith maintain a privileged status that absolves them from the obligation to rigidly abide by the regulations and modes of conduct delineated by *karma*, nevertheless there remains an onus to avoid sin and strive to

⁵³ atraiva ca niṣkāma-karmaṇy api yady anyan na samācared iti vakṣyamāṇa-niṣedhātī karma-parityāga-vidhānena sutarām duḥkarma-parityāga-pratyāsatteḥ (Monika Horstmann, p.271)

⁵⁴ atra kāmā apāpakarā eva jñeyāḥ śāstre kathamcid api anyānuvidhānāyogātī (Monika Horstmann, p.271)

⁵⁵ Furthermore, earlier according to Sridhara Svāmī's comments on BP 11.10.4, [tathā ekādaśeḥ nivṛttaṁ karma seveta pravṛttaṁ mat-paraḥ tyajet ity atra svāmi-vyākhyā caḥ ataḥ pravṛttaṁ kāmyaṁ karma tyajetī nivṛttaṁ nitya-naimittikam eva kuryād] (Monika Horstmann, p.221), even for a novice Vaiṣṇava bhakta who has acquired weak faith, of the four types of karma, only nitya and naimittika-karma are prescribed which automatically prohibits engagement in *kāmya* karmas and sinful activities. Consequently, it is safe to assume that for one who has succeeded in reaching an elevated stage of faith, namely firm faith who is categorized as a madhyama or uttama bhakta would certainly be expected to avoid sins, especially in light of the stipulation that the inferior positioned bhakta is required to avoid even *kāmya* karmas.

⁵⁶ Viśvanātha also offers clarifications on this verse. Viśvanātha's comments in his *Sārtha-darṣiṇi* on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* shed further light upon BP 11.20.27-28, and he suggests herein that the 'enjoyments' referred to in these verses are not those outside of scriptural injunctions. He gives the example of enjoyments in relation to a family man's interaction with his wife and children, and the rising attachment to them that may occur in family dealings, which could be considered 'mild sins' endorsed by scripture.

sustain standards of personal noble conduct, and indeed, this mode of exemplary behavior is expected to be exhibited especially by a *bhakta* who has attained firm faith by testament of his advanced position. This strategic approach from the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* of providing a corrective reading of verses such as BP 11.20.27-28 by relying on Jīva illustrate the concern for suspect theological rationalizations that endorse unorthodox and unethical conduct.

The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* also refers to BS 173 in which Jīva Gosvāmī also highlights that there are comparable ambiguous statements to BP 11.20.27-28 that could potentially be misconstrued endorsing the belief that there exists a license to transgress Vedic injunctions for one who has advanced on the path of *bhakti*. Such statements would prove to be problematic to the pursuit of ascertaining social norms for governing bodies. For instance, Jīva quotes, the *Garuda Purāṇa* which states: ‘One who remembers the lotus-eyed Lord is pure both externally and internally’.⁵⁷ A literal reading of this verse would postulate that bathing would no longer be necessary for a Vaiṣṇava, it could also be interpreted to infer that codes of conduct induced by established behavioral norms are also no longer necessary. To thwart this danger, Jīva counteracts such ideas by stressing however that such unorthodox behavior would contradict the noble conduct promoted by renowned saints such as Nārada and Vyāsa. He states: ‘Yet although they have faith (in such statements i.e. *Garuda Purāṇa* ‘One who remembers...’), they still bathe out of respect for the behavior of the tradition of saints established by figures like the venerable Vyāsa and Nārada.’⁵⁸ ‘Otherwise, violation of such behavior will become an offense. Hence, these saints have established a proper example for the world to prevent bad actions.’⁵⁹ To neutralize misconceptions derived from such passages the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* references Jīva who proposes that one should imitate the example of such *bhakti* exemplars who have comprehended the true import of statements such as the reference to the *Garuda Purāṇa*.

Another contentious verse referenced in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* that Jīva discusses is BG 9.30: ‘Even if one participates in heinous activities, if he worships me without deviation, he should certainly be considered saintly, because he is properly situated.’⁶⁰ Once again, there is a possibility that this verse may be misappropriated, and so Jīva clarifies that although *śraddhā* here

⁵⁷ [apavitraḥ pavitro vā sarvāvasthāṃ gato’pi vā] | yaḥ smaret puṇḍarikākṣaṃ sa bāhyābhyantara-śuciḥ (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.7b) (Monika Horstmann, p.274)

⁵⁸ ādau śraddadhānā api snānādikam ācaranti | tat khalu śrīman-nārada-vyāsādi-sat-paramparācāra-gauravād eva (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.8a) (Monika Horstmann, p.274)

⁵⁹ anyathā tad-atikrame ’py aparādhaḥ syāt | te ca tathā maryādām lokasya kadarya-vṛtṭyādi-nirodhāyaiva sthāpitavanta iti jñeyam (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.8a) (Monika Horstmann, p.275)

⁶⁰ api cet su-durācāro bhajate mām ananya-bhāk sādhu eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.8b) (Monika Horstmann, p.276)

is characterized by the compound *ananya-bhāk*, ‘without deviation’⁶¹ however, such faith is not born via the understanding of *śāstrā*, but is gained through worldly traditions.⁶² This type of faith is also referred to in verses such as BG 17.1: ‘What is the position of those who forsake scriptural injunctions yet who worship with faith.’⁶³ In contrast, when one’s faith derived from scripture is awakened, there is no possibility of heinous activities.⁶⁴ Indeed, such acts contradict scriptures which bring satisfaction to Viṣṇu.⁶⁵ Thus, the faith acquired in BG 9.30 is of an inferior status to faith derived from scripture.⁶⁶ If faith is derived from scripture then one recognizes that transgressing the scriptural injunctions would displease Viṣṇu, thus conflicting with the very essence of a Vaiṣṇava, namely to please Viṣṇu.

Continuing to guard against misinterpretations of BG 9.30, Jīva also refers once again to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 3.8.13 and the *Viṣṇu-dharma Purāṇa* which I analyzed earlier, these references display how scriptures encourage restraint of behavioral and moral modes of conduct to satisfy Viṣṇu.⁶⁷ Furthermore, Jīva also states that the *Gītā* verse in question features the particle ‘*api*’ or ‘even’ in the phrase, implies that heinous activity is to be rejected and not encouraged in any

⁶¹ uktasyānanya-bhāktvena lakṣitā (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.8b) (Monika Horstmann, p.276)

⁶² loka-paramparā-prāptā, na tu śāstrāvadhāraṇa-jātā (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.8b) (Monika Horstmann, p.276)

⁶³ ye śāstra-vidhim utsrjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ (BG 17.1) (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.8b) (Monika Horstmann, p.276)

⁶⁴ śāstrīya-śraddhāyām tu jātāyām sudurācāratvāyogaḥ syāt (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.8b) (Monika Horstmann, p.276)

⁶⁵ viṣṇu-toṣaṇa-śāstra-virodhāt (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.8b) (Monika Horstmann, p.276)

⁶⁶ Rembert Lutjeharms explains that Jīva Gosvāmī considers one who has acquired faith through worldly or popular traditions or non-scriptural based faith to be the faith possessed by the Bhāgavata’s ‘materialistic devotee’. This faith is illustrated in BP 11.2.44-47, where the lowest category of *bhaktas*, the *kaniṣṭha bhakta* is described as a materialistic devotee, who worships the deity of Hari (Kṛṣṇa) with faith, however does not behave appropriately towards his devotees and others. (arcāyām eva haraye pūjām yaḥ śraddhayehate na tad-bhakteṣu cānyeṣu sa bhaktaḥ prākṛtaḥ smṛtaḥ). In light of this understanding, the materialistic *bhakta* or *kaniṣṭha bhakta*’s faith is weak being born from worldly traditions instead of faith born from scriptural injunctions. This also indicates that faith should preferably be based on scripture, the knowledge presented in scriptures leads to strong faith that prevents one from transgressing scriptural injunctions. (Lutjeharms, “Śraddha in Caitanya Vaisnava Thought”, p.93-94)

⁶⁷ (Monika Horstmann, p.276)

way.⁶⁸ In other words, such activities are rare exceptions and not the norm. In this way, improper behavior is denounced in BG 9.30 according to Jīva. It is further understood from the following verse that once a *bhakta* becomes fixed in righteousness, any last vestiges of impropriety will be given up, BG 9.31 states ‘Thus, he immediately becomes virtuous.’⁶⁹ Furthermore, Jīva describes that such despicable behavior is an insult to the name of God, as stated in this verse: ‘One who commits sins on the strength of the sacred name of God cannot be purified by following any rules.’⁷⁰ Therefore, the *Gītā* verse 9.30 should not be accepted as a characteristic attribute of a person with mature faith eligible to perform *bhakti* and such heinous acts are discouraged and considered antithetical. Through Jīva, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* stresses how such troublesome scriptural statements should be correctly understood so as not to degrade ideal moral behavior.

This section examines the moral obligations of a *bhakti* practitioner, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* presents a series of contentious verses illustrating the transcendent position of Vaiṣṇavas who have mature faith. Relying heavily on Jīva, the work exhibits that in spite of *bhakti* practitioners attaining a privileged status, it stresses the significance of conducting oneself according to time-honored moral norms based on scriptural rulings and the exemplar models of saints. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* demonstrate that passages such as BP 11.20.27-28 found in scriptures are not intended to encourage or permit actions that contradict the codes of conduct defined by orthodox norms, nor are the references to the *Garuda Purāṇa* and BG 9.30 discussed earlier. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* utilizes the ingenuity of Jīva Gosvāmī, to emphatically illustrate that even if one achieves mature or firm faith in the practice of *bhakti* nevertheless they still retain an obligation to adhere to orthodox forms of behavior and conduct.

Lokasaṅgraha

Having surmised that those who are beyond the jurisdiction of scriptural injunctions pertaining to *karma* by virtue of mature faith, nevertheless follow them in accordance with previous saints for the satisfaction of Viṣṇu and therefore do not indulge in immoral and unorthodox modes of conduct, in this section, I will explore a related yet distinct motivation for adhering to such injunctions. The notion of *lokasaṅgraha* denotes the responsibility to benefit the people of the

⁶⁸ *api-śabdena durācāratvasya heyatva-vyañjanāt* (*Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, p.8b) (Monika Horstmann, p.276)

⁶⁹ *tathā kṣipram bhavati dharmātmā ity-uttarāpratipatteḥ* (*Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, p.8b) (Monika Horstmann, p.276)

⁷⁰ *nāmno balād yasya hi pāpa-buddhir na vidyate tasya yamair hi śuddhiḥ* (Monika Horstmann, p.276)

world or in other words, the adoption of public responsibility for the public good. The compound *lokasaṅgraha*, comprises of ‘*loka*’ which conveys mankind or the world, and ‘*saṅgraha*’ which implies protecting, maintaining or holding. Public responsibility is generally understood to be an ethical framework whereby an individual is obliged to act for the wider benefit of society at large. Thus, one’s actions are no longer determined by simply his own personal interests but also subject to the concerns of the wider community. The expression perhaps first appears in the *Bhāgavad-Gītā* 3.20⁷¹ and epitomizes the social and universal dimension of Kṛṣṇa’s teachings. Consequently, this notion has been promoted in recent history by those seeking political independence to justify political and social causes, with the aim of encouraging unity of purpose and a co-operative effort in society for a political cause.⁷²

I will examine how the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* utilizes the notion of *lokasaṅgraha*, endorsing further how to partake in worldly life responsibly, without fundamentally violating one’s ultimate commitment to *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. This section therefore centers on how the Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava tradition promotes social integration and the preservation of social order and norms for the benefit of others. In this regard, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, firstly states:

First of all, for an independent *bhakta* with mature faith only *arcana* is prescribed. However, for one of weak faith and one who has mature faith dependent on benefitting the people of the world, *arcana* is taught mixed with *karma*. Both [of those with mature faith] are accepted as pure *bhaktas* due to the rejection of any fault in being mixed with *karma* by the discussion of the state of the cause of such *karma*.⁷³

⁷¹ karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ loka-saṅgraham evāpi sampaśyan kartum arhasi

Indeed, simply by executing karma kings like Janaka and so on, were situated in perfection, and therefore you are obliged to perform action for holding the world together.

⁷² Catherine A. Robinson, *Interpretations of the Bhagavad-Gītā and Images of the Hindu traditions*, (New York, 2006), p.54-71

⁷³ tatrātau nirapekṣa-prauḍha-śraddhasya kevalam arcanam uktaṁ mṛdu-śraddha-loka-saṅgrahāpekṣa-prauḍha-śraddhayos tu karma-miśraṁ tad-uddiṣṭa agre tat-karma-karaṇa-vyavasthā-kathanena karma-miśratva-doṣa-nirasana dvārā tayoh śuddha-bhaktatam apy aṅgīkṛtam asti yathā (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.9b)

The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* proposes here that one who has mature faith should engage in *karma* for the sake of the wider society and this in no way compromises his *bhakti*, to substantiate this perspective the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* refers to Jīva Gosvāmī citing *Bhakti-Sandarbhā* 284:

Therefore, there are two types of *arcana* – pure and mixed with *karma*. The first one, which is for those independent (of scriptural rules), who possess faith, is described by Āvirhotra: (BP 11.3.47) ‘One who [desires to cut] the knot in the heart...’ And also spoken by Nārada: (BP 4.29.46) ‘When one is favored by the Lord, self-realized, that person gives up interest in society and in the Vedas.’ *Agastya-saṁhitā* on this matter states: ‘As the prescriptions and prohibitions do not apply to a liberated person; in the same way, they do not touch one who worships Lord Rāma according to the prescriptions.’⁷⁴

The second type of *arcana* (mixed with *karma*) is said to apply to those who have faith characterized by such things as excessive regard for worldly activities and the occasional execution of *bhakti*. Similarly, it also applies to householders who, although having faith that is contrary [to that of the general public], do not neglect the establishment of general Vedic *karma* for those who are ignorant of the path of *bhakti*.⁷⁵ In *Nārada-pañcarātra*, in the beginning of the discussion on faith, Śrī Nārāyaṇa says in the same way: ‘O Nārada, even if one is perfect, if he doesn’t perform worldly *dharma* there will be degradation and thus

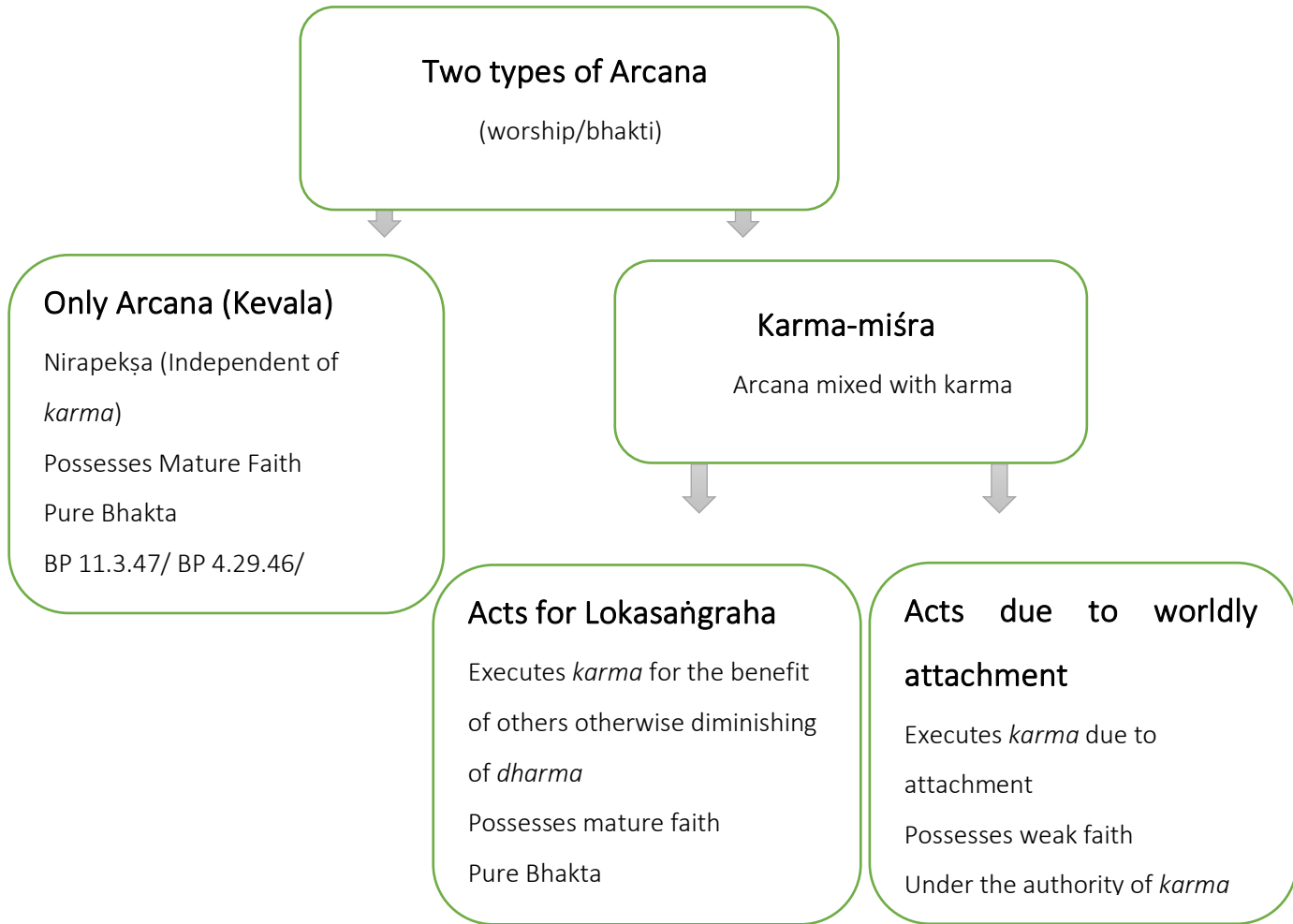
⁷⁴ tad etad-arcanaṁ dvividhaṁ kevalaṁ karma-miśraṁ ca | tad etad-arcanaṁ dvividhaṁ kevalaṁ karma-miśraṁ ca | tayoḥ pūrvaṁ nirapekṣānāṁ śraddhāvatāṁ darśitaṁ āvirhotreṇa, ‘ya āśu hṛdaya-granthim...’ ity ādau | uktaṁ ca śrī-nāradena, ‘yadā yasyānuḡrṇhāti bhagavān ātma-bhāvitaḥ, sa jahāti matiṁ loke vede ca pariniṣṭhitāṁ’ iti | atra śrīmad-agastya-saṁhitā ca ‘yathā vidhi-niṣedhau tu mukta naivopasarpaṭaḥ, tathā na sprśato rāmapāsaka vidhi-pūrvakam’ iti (*Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, p.9b) (Monika Horstmann, p.262)

⁷⁵ uttaraṁ vyavahāra-ceṣṭātiśayavattā yādṛcchikā-bhakti-anuṣṭhānavattādi-lakṣaṇa-lakṣita-śraddhānāṁ tathā vaiparītya-lakṣitā-śraddhānāṁ api pratiṣṭhitānāṁ bhakti-vārttānabhijñā-buddhiṣu sādharmaṇa-vaidika-karmānuṣṭhāna-lopo ‘pi mā ‘bhūd iti loka-saṅgraha-parāṇāṁ ḡrhasṭhānāṁ darśitaṁ (*Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, p.10a) (Monika Horstmann, p.262)

diminishing of *dharma*. Therefore, all persons skilled in discrimination should protect worldly acts keeping it as it is until their death.⁷⁶

The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* substantiates its stance on public responsibility by referring to the *Bhakti-Sandarbha* which in turn refers to the *Agastya-saṁhitā*, *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* and the *Nārada-Pañcarātra*. Jīva Gosvāmī describes two types of worshippers, one who is pure and independent of scriptural injunctions, and the other whose worship is mixed with *karma* and therefore obliged to perform Vedic rituals. The second category of worshipper also includes those pure householders who although empowered with mature faith are still obliged to perform Vedic *karma* for the sake of encouraging the general public to abide by such religious principles. This chart depicts the description outlined in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*:

⁷⁶ śrī-nārada-pañcarātre caivam eva śrī-nārāyaṇa-vākyam śrāddha-kathanāraṁbhe, nācared yas tu siddho'pi laukikam dharmam arhataḥ, upaplavāc ca dharmasya glānir bhavati nārada, vivekajñair ataḥ sarvair lokācāro yathā-sthitaḥ, ādehapātād yatnena rakṣaṇīyaḥ prayatnata iti (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.10a) (Monika Horstmann, p.262)



The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* also offers an intriguing perspective on BP 11.27.11 as cited in BS 284:

(BP 11.27.11) '*Karmas* such as the worship of the *sandhyas* which are prescribed by the Vedas, one should execute this as worship to me with complete resolve, that *karma* is purified.'⁷⁷ Activities such as the worship of *sandhya* acts i.e. *nitya* and *naimittika karmas*. By these i.e. by these activities, one should perform the worship completely. He who does not perform them, because of possibility of fault, will result in the incompleteness of the worship. *Karma* is purified i.e. for he who

⁷⁷ sandhyopāstyādi-karmāṇi vedenācoditāni me pūjām taiḥ kalpayet samyak-sankalpaḥ karma-pāvanīm || ity ādi spaṣṭam (*Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, p.10b)

performs *karma*, the mixture of *karma* with *bhakti* does not lead to fault.⁷⁸

In this passage, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* emphasizes that *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* must be executed to complete worship, in other words if one doesn't perform them their worship is considered deficient, which is somewhat of a radical interpretation. These comments attempt to alleviate any fears a *bhakta* may have in engaging in *karma* and stresses the obligation to *karma* he holds if he is involved in public life. This also reflects the concern over the adoption of *karma*, in this period. Such perspectives were undoubtedly spurred on by the politico-religious pressures of the day, that inspired the promotion of orthodox practices such as *karma*.

These passages declare that for one positioned within the public domain conducting oneself suitably for the wider society is essential, even if one possessed mature faith in *bhakti*. Failure to operate in this manner presented a risk for the less faithful due to the possible premature imitation of advanced *bhaktas*, resulting in inappropriate modes of behavior in the guise of *bhakti* practice. This requirement applies particularly to very mature practitioners who are actively engaged in society, such as the *grhasthas* or householders possessing mature faith as delineated according to Jīva. Such a responsibility is incumbent upon the socially active *bhakta* in spite of internal independence from the injunctions of *karma* arising from unshakable faith in the path of *bhakti*. This is primarily because the *bhakta* is stationed within the confines of a community and must act for the long-term best interests of his fellow members. The reader is warned that failure to behave in this way for the sake of the society as a whole will result in negative consequences. Kṛṣṇadeva also adds in the *Karma-vivṛti*, that the term 'householder' is but a partial description of those who are eligible, and indeed, the authority of *karma* also extends to the members of the other *āśramas* i.e. *brahmacārīs*, *vānaprasthas*, and monks. It is expected that the *bhakta* possessing mature faith engage in *karma* because it is their responsibility to encourage the common man, whose faith is weak.⁷⁹ Kṛṣṇadeva's proposition expands the extent

⁷⁸ sandhyopāstyādi karmāṇi nitya-naimittikāni taiḥ karmābhiḥ pūjāṃ samyak kalpayed iti | tasya tad-akarṇe pratyavāyaḥ saṃbhavāt tena pūjāyā api asamyatkvaṃ syād iti bhāvaḥ | karmā-pāvanīm ity asya karma-karṇe tu tan-miśratvaṃ na doṣāyetībhāvaḥ || (*Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, p.11a)

⁷⁹ vyavahārā-ceṣṭātiśayavattā yādṛcchika-bhakty-anuṣṭhānavattādi-lakṣaṇena lakṣitā āiṣatsraddhā yeṣāṃ komala-śraddhānām kaniṣṭhādhikāriṇām ity arthaḥ, vaiparītya-lakṣita-śraddhānām vaiparītyena yādṛcchika-vyavahāra-ceṣṭāvattā-bhakty-anuṣṭhānātiśayavattā-rūpeṇa lakṣitā śraddhā yeṣāṃ teṣāṃ dṛḍha-śraddhānām ity arthaḥ, grhasthānām ity

of responsibility pertaining to *lokasaṅgraha* and claims it was not only the responsibility of *gṛhasthas* or householders to set ideal standards for the wider society but of members of all *āśramas* within the *varṇāśrama* social body, indicating there was a concerted effort to propagate a broader awareness for all members of the public arena regarding their individual responsibilities to uphold ideals and standards, subsequently almost no one was exempt from this public responsibility.

In the *Karma-vivṛti* Kṛṣṇadeva also provides further insights into the notion of *lokasaṅgraha* by referring to the *Nārada-Pañcarātra* and *Bhāgavad-Gīta*. The *Nārada-Pañcarātra*, *Lakṣmī-saṁhitā*, chapter seventeen states:

If in this situation, one should surrender to Janārdana (Lord of living beings) and Jaganatha (Lord of world), indeed if only once this type of discussion on the meaning of scripture is made, this discussion causes such a man to swim across [the ocean of worldly existence attaining salvation], resulting in the union of unfavorable and favorable conditions. On account of this one who is absent of this devotion is at a loss and when there is a possibility of this loss, one needs to perform atonement. In the case of the means of acceptance. Even though helpfulness has been accepted still in that case also atonement indeed is to be done. In order for *dharma* not to be destroyed, for the purification of the family, to guide people, and to establish behavioral norms and for my pleasure, Viṣṇu, the God of Gods, who holds the bow made of a horn, an intelligent man should not transgress the prescribed Vedic practice even mentally. Indeed, just as a person favored by a king would be pierced by a spike if he breaks a beautiful channel that has been built by the king, which is useful to many people, and causes ample crops to grow, even if he doesn't expect anything personally from this. Similarly, a person who breaks the behavioral norms created by the Vedas, even though dear to me, still he won't be considered to be dear to me, because of going against My orders.⁸⁰

apalakṣaṇam, brahmacārī-vānaprastha-bhikṣūnām, eteṣāṃ pūrvoktānāṃ iṣac chraddha-loka-saṅgrāhaka-dṛḍha-śraddha-bhaktānām ity eṣa sandarbharthaḥ (Monika Horstmann, p.264)

⁸⁰ yathā nārada-pañcarātre lakṣmī-saṁhitāyāṃ sapta-daśādhyāye, 'asyāṃ sthito jagannāthaṃ prapadyeta janārdanam, sakṛd eva hi śāstrārthaḥ kṛto'yaṃ tārayen naram, upāyāpāya-saṃyoge

The *Nārada-Pañcarātra*, outlines the principles of *bhakti*. In this passage, the significance of following prescribed Vedic duties are stressed. As well as following such prescribed standards for the benefit of others in one's community, one should also follow them for the sake of pleasing the Lord. Applying an analogy, the Lord explains that by not following the injunctions from the scriptures in order to maintain exemplary behavioral and social standards great displeasure is experienced by him, even if one is very dear to him.

Kṛṣṇadeva follows this citation with a well-known passage from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, BG 3.19-26.⁸¹ In this series of passages, Kṛṣṇa declares that *karma* is to be executed for the benefit of others, because whatever exemplary people enact others will imitate. In this regard Kṛṣṇa shares the examples of the celebrated king Janaka and even himself, emphasizing that although free from all obligations pertaining to *karma*, they both accepted the path of *karma* in order to establish an ideal standard for others under the authority of prescribed *karmas*. By citing such examples who embody the principle of *lokasaṅgraha*, it was hoped that this would inspire the sanctity of the social orders to be upheld resulting in the purity of the general populace.

Thus, in the course of examining the notion of *lokasaṅgraha*, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* advocates the critical importance of *lokasaṅgraha* and cites a range of arguments to do so. Thus, promoting the requirement to following scriptural injunctions pertaining to *karma* for the sake of foregrounding an ideal model for those that would otherwise not be inclined to respect such injunctions. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and even the *Karma-vivṛti* which we refer to intermittently largely draw on Jīva Goswāmī's *Bhakti-Sandarbhā* to provide theological substantiation to support the assertion that those who possess mature faith should nevertheless perform *karma* outwardly for the benefit of the public. Although this *karma* may resemble the practice of those who have weak faith, nevertheless for those who have mature faith it does not in any way compromise their elevated status or degrade their faith. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* even advocates that *nitya* and *naimittika karma* must be executed for their worship to the Lord

'niṣṭhayā hīyate' nayā, apāyasam̐bhve caitat-prāyaścittam̐ samācāret, upāyānām upāyatva-svikāre 'py etad eva hi, aviplavāya dharmāṅam̐ pāvanāya kulasya ca, saṅgrahāya ca lokasya maryād-āsthāpanāya ca, priyāya mama viṣṇoś ca deva-devasya śārṅigaṅaḥ, manīṣī vaidikācāram̐ manasāpi na laṅghayet, yathā hi vallabho rājño nadīm̐ rājñā pravarttitām, lokopayoginīm̐ ramyām̐ bahusasya vivardhinīm̐ laṅghayan śūlam̐ ārohed anapekṣo 'pi tāṃ prati, evam̐ vilam̐ghayan martyo maryādām̐ veda-nirmitām, priyo'pi na priyo'sau me mad-ājñā-prativartanād' iti (Monika Horstmann, p.260-261)

⁸¹ (Monika Horstmann, p.261-262)

to be considered complete, and also proposes that if a socially engrossed advanced *bhakta* doesn't engage in *karma* for the sake of others, they suffer a drawback. Kṛṣṇadeva in the *Karma-vivṛti* also refers to the *Nārada-Pañcarātra* and the *Bhāgavad-Gīta* to further reinforce the scriptural significance of *lokasaṅgraha*. Kṛṣṇadeva also proposes that social responsibilities governed by the *varṇāśrama* system are not only the responsibility of *bhaktas* that are householders but of all members of the various *āśramas*, even those who are ascetically inclined. These passages provide significant insights in light of our prior discussion examining the juncture at which *karma* can be abandoned; clearly for the authors of these works, Vaiṣṇavas have a social responsibility regardless of their level of faith, and the works examined fashion innovative theological compositions deploying rhetorical passages to stress the significance of *varṇāśrama* injunctions and social order as integral to the practice of *bhakti*.

Thus, in examining topics of morality and *lokasaṅgraha* it is revealed that there is a consciously developed public theology which operates beyond the principle of adopting *karma* until one is qualified to abandon it. From this analysis, it is also evident that for the Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava sect there is a public responsibility to engage in scriptural codes and norms pertaining to *karma* and *varṇāśrama* not only to encourage and educate others but also because adhering to such rules are satisfying to Viṣṇu regardless of one's level of faith. This also crucially demonstrates that the practice of *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa and engagement in worldly acts governed by *varṇāśrama*, can function alongside each other even at the highest levels of *bhakti*. In the following section I will explore specific guidelines recommended to aid such a *bhakta* with mature faith to perform worldly actions, so as not to compromise his status and continued progress on the path of *bhakti*.

How should a *bhakta* with mature faith execute *karma*?

If one possessing mature faith in *bhakti* is required to indulge in worldly modes of living derived from prescribed duties of *karma*, how should one conduct themselves without compromising their elevated standing in *bhakti*? In other words, how does one who has transcended the scriptural injunctions concerning *karma* nevertheless engage in prescribed *varṇāśrama* duties without succumbing to worldly contamination or influence that could possibly jeopardize their status in *bhakti*? To address this vital matter, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* once again refers to select passages from Jīva Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-Sandarbha*, firstly BS 285 followed by BS 238:

The system of *karma* for these persons is prescribed in two ways. The first which is set forth in books like *Nārada-Pañcarātra*, is the worship

of everything by seeing all as Bhagavān who is situated in one's heart. The second is provided in scriptures like the *Viṣṇu-yamala* in the following fashion: 'One should perform the satisfactory rites for ancestors only with the water that has washed Lord Viṣṇu's feet. One should worship a god other than Viṣṇu only with food offered to Viṣṇu.'⁸²

According to Jīva Gosvāmī, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas who accept *bhakti* as their ultimate aspiration should engage in *karma* with two critical principles in mind. Firstly, one should observe the Lord everywhere as present in the heart of all beings, and secondly, offerings to ancestors and other gods should only be made after first being offered to Viṣṇu. Imbibing these principles ensures that Viṣṇu remains the object of devotion irrespective of the *bhakta's* activities. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* provides further insights on these two principles to emphasize that such actions are not contrary to the path of *śuddha-bhakti*. *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* proposes as follows:

The worship of other gods should be done with the vision that Bhagavān or Viṣṇu is present within the gods. Furthermore, *śraddhā* rites [to ancestors] should be performed with the *prasāda* of Bhagavān according to the guidelines of *Hari-Bhakti-Vilāsa*. In this way, he (Sanātana Gosvāmī) makes it known that *karmas* are not contradictory to *śuddha-bhakti*. Therefore, it is accepted in his commentary to the words '*na rodhayati...*' in the section about the glories of *sat-saṅga*, that even such *karmas* fall within *śuddha-bhakti*.⁸³

The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* building on Jīva Gosvāmī's presentation states that other gods if worshiped should be conducted with the understanding that Viṣṇu is present within them. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* also refers to Sanātana Gosvāmī's *Hari-Bhakti-Vilāsa*, which is the ritual

⁸² eteṣāṃ ca dvidhā karma-vyavasthā śrī-nārada-pañcarātrādau, antaryāmi-śrī-bhagavad-drṣṭyaiva sarvārādhanaṃ, vihitam viṣṇu-yāmalādau tu, viṣṇu-pādodakenaiva pitṛṇāṃ tarpaṇa-kriyā, viṣṇor niveditānnena yaṣṭavyaṃ devatāntaram ityādi prakāreṇa vihitam itīti (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.11a) (Monika Horstmann, p.263)

⁸³ atrāntarāyāmi bhagavadrṣṭyā tadīyatvena vā tat-prasādādīnā 'nyārādhana hari-bhakti-vilāse ca vaiṣṇava-śraddhādikam bhagavat-prasādānnādinā vihitam asti karmmadikam api na śuddha bhakti virodhīti bodhayati, ata eva tādrśa-kārmmanīti śuddha bhaktyantaḥ pāto 'ngīkṛtosti sat-saṅga-mahima-prakaraṇe na rodhayatītyādi vyākhyāne (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.11a)

text for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, and thus the ideal manual for rituals pertaining to *karma* for the tradition. If these guidelines are accepted whilst adhering to ritual injunctions, one's pure *bhakti* status is preserved despite one's *karmic* conduct. Further performative guidelines for modes of worldly conduct for a *bhakta*, are offered in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* by referring to *Bhakti-Sandarbha* 238 which states:

In that section, the words 'agni-hotra and so on' enter into *bhakti* [status] because of satiating the fire, and so on, as it's the dwelling of Bhagavān who is the *antaryāmī* [of the fire]. And digging wells and creating gardens are also included in *bhakti* because of being performed for sake of serving the Supreme. These activities also fall within *bhakti*, since they are done for the purpose of worshiping Bhagavān, and this also shows [that *karmas* aren't contradictory to *bhakti*].⁸⁴

The broad scope of *bhakti* is expounded here, whether it be *agni-hotras*, or digging wells or creating gardens if they are performed for the pleasure of the Supreme or executed conscious of the Supreme, all are considered *bhakti*. What is remarkable is that the internal motivation underlying a *karmic* activity is what determines its classification as *bhakti* and not the activity itself. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* comments on this passage as follows:

By this passage if *tatra* (in that section) is taken in another way, there would be a disruption in the flow of [Jīva's] argument with acceptance of something which has not been discussed earlier. 'In *bhakti*' (see earlier) means in '*śuddha-bhakti*'. The digging of wells and creation of gardens which are performed for the sake of serving the Supreme (are included in *śuddha-bhakti*) due to the acceptance of *śuddha-bhakti* to include all actions for the sake of the Supreme. Otherwise the proposal [described] up until the method of seeing the inner being in all beings would be considered meaningless, even if the perfection [described] is

⁸⁴ tatrāgni-hotrādīnām bhaktau praveśo 'gny-antaryāmi-rūpa-bhagavad-adhiṣṭhānatvenāgnyādisamṭarpaṇāt, kūpārāmādīnām ca tat-paricaryārthā-kriyamānatvāt tatra praveśa ity anena anyathā tatrety anenāpūrva-parāmarśa-svīkāreṇa prakrama bhaṅgāpattiḥ (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.11a & 11b)

only *bhakti* [practiced] by *aropa-siddhi* and so forth. Even when there is the *bhakti* mixed with *karma*, he rejects the idea of mixed *karma*.⁸⁵

The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* provides clarification to the nature of *bhakti* described in BS 238. The author of the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* contends that it should be considered nothing other than *śuddha-bhakti*, reasoning that the placement of this passage within Jīva's overall argument in this section indicates this. The work also argues that although the *bhakti* practices described may appear to be mixed with *karma* however it is not tainted by *karma*, even though *karma* is enacted.

In summary, according to the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, maintaining the vision of Viṣṇu within everyone and everything is central to maintaining the status of *śuddha-bhakti* when performing *karma*, which may entail worshiping gods other than Viṣṇu, or executing activities that appear to be *karma* or mixed with *karma*. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* bases its presentation in this regard primarily on the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and Jīva's *Bhakti Sandarbha*. Kṛṣṇadeva in the *Karma-vivṛti* adopts a similar stance, declaring that even the worship of other gods by the *bhakta* falls within the boundaries of *śuddha-bhakti* and not *karma* if the *bhakta* views other gods as either forms of Bhagavān or as His subjects, or as His representatives, and consequently that worship transforms into a form of direct worship of Bhagavān.⁸⁶ He reinforces this claim drawing on two verses from the *Bhagāvata-Purāṇa*, BP 5.19.26 and BP 6.4.28.⁸⁷ Therefore, as long as one offers respects to other gods whilst mindful of the exalted position of the Lord, one may partake in such worship whilst continuing to progress on the path of *śuddha-bhakti*. Kṛṣṇadeva in the *Karma-vivṛti* further quotes Jīva's *Bhakti-Sandarbha* 106 which states: 'One should worship

⁸⁵ anena anyathā tatreyt anenāpūrva-parāmarśa-svīkāreṇa prakrama-bhaṅgāpattiḥ bhaktau śuddha-bhaktāv ity artha bhagavad-pāricaryārthām kriyamāṇa-kūpārāmādinām tad-arthākhilaceṣṭītāntargatattvena śuddha-bhakti-svīkārāt bhakti-mātratvasyāropādināpi siddhāv antaryāmidrṣṭi-vidhāna-paryantānusandhānānārthakyaṃ ca syāt | ataeva tādrśa-karmma-miśratva saty api karma-miśratvādi nirasanam evāha (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.11b)

⁸⁶ athavā bhagavad-rūpatvena bhagavadīyatvena bhagavad-adhiṣṭhānatvena vā devatāntarasya yajanasypī svarūpa-siddha-śuddha-bhaktiyantaḥpāta eva na tu karmatvaṃ sāksād-bhagavad-ārādhana-rūpatvāt (Monika Horstmann, p.280)

⁸⁷ devatānām bhagavad-abhedas tu bhagavata eva sarva-rūpatvāt | tac ca ekaḥ pṛthan-nāmabhir āhuto mudā grhṇāti pūrṇaḥ svayam āśiṣām prabhuḥ | sa sarva-nāmā sa ca sarva-rūpaḥ vinācyutād vastutarām na vācyam | Other gods are non-different from the Lord because the Lord is identical with all forms. And as stated in (BP 5.19.26:) The complete Lord, the master of blessings is invoked by various names, he joyfully accepts (the offerings). In (BP 6.4.28:) All the names belong to Him, and all the forms are His forms... One cannot name a substance which is not Lord Acyuta. (Monika Horstmann, p.281)

Brahmā and Śiva as Vaiṣṇavas. Thus, some exclusive *bhaktas* consider Śiva as either a Vaiṣṇava, or a manifestation of the Lord. And so, by worshiping someone as the Lord's servant great benefit is attained. On the contrary, neglect can be considered an offence.⁸⁸ Thus, Kṛṣṇadeva provides reassurances that worshipping other gods and *bhakti* are indeed compatible, under the condition that the *bhakta* view other gods as fellow Vaiṣṇavas, servants of Viṣṇu or as representatives of Viṣṇu or forms of Viṣṇu.

Both the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and *Karma-vivṛti* build their presentations upon Jīva Gosvāmī's teachings. These works aim to provide guidelines in the conduct of worldly affairs for *bhaktas* who possess mature faith and provide assurances that such activities even the worship of other gods, if performed according to the directions of authorities such as Jīva, will not compromise one's faith and progress in the path of pure *bhakti*. Thus, a publically active *bhakta* should strive to perform prescribed *karmas* of *varṇāśrama*, whilst placing Viṣṇu at the center of such actions, following such guidelines as outline in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, subsequently he will be able to maintain a strong resolve in *bhakti* alone according to these works.

Summaries

In the concluding segments of the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and the *Karma-vivṛti*, a summary of their positions pertaining to the role of *karma* for a *bhakta* is outlined. I will firstly share the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya's* final summary:

Now, these are the stages. Firstly, there is complete faith in actions. Then, from the execution of that, [one attains] mixed faith, a portion of [faith] in *karma* and *bhakti* due to the power of the association of *bhaktas* who have mixed desires for only *bhakti*. Then, by this they execute *bhakti* with mixed desires only for *bhakti*.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ tac ca bhāgavatādaḥ prasiddham eva bhakti-saṃdarbhāś ca śrī-brahma-śivāv api vaiṣṇavatvenaiva bhajeteti' tato 'nanyabhaktāḥ śrī-śivam api vaiṣṇavatvenaiva mānānti kecit, kadācit tad-adhiṣṭhānatvenaiva veti, tasmāt tadīyatvenopāsanāyām kvacid rūpa-guṇo 'pi bhavati, avajñādaḥ tu doṣa iti, tasmād anyeṣāman anādaro na kartavyaḥ, tat-saṃbandhenādarādikaṃ ca kartavyaṃ svātantryeṇopāsanam tu dhikkṛtam (Monika Horstmann, p.283)

⁸⁹ atrāyam kramah || ādaḥ karmani pūrṇa-śraddhā, tatas tad-anuṣṭhānato bhakti-mātra-kāma-miśra-bhakta-saṅgādi-vaśād aṃśataḥ karmani bhaktau ca miśra śraddhā, tatas tayā bhakti-mātra-kāma-miśra-bhakty-anuṣṭhānam. (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.14a)

This account illustrates the progression of a *bhakta* in relation to *karma*. His faith initially entirely resides in *karma*, however due to the association of *bhaktas*, one's faith progresses so that now it dwells in both *karma* and *bhakti*, this denotes a mixed type of faith directed to both *karma* and *bhakti*. The mixed *karma-bhakti* discussed here is clarified earlier in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* by a reference to a passage from Jīva Gosvāmī who reveals the precise nature of this practice. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* begins by describing a form of *karma* practice which impedes the execution of *śuddha* or pure *bhakti* as follows:

Due to the two-fold nature of *karma* by the division of it concealing *bhakti* and not concealing *bhakti*, mixed *karma* is also two-fold, conflicting with pure *bhakti* (*śuddha-bhakti*) and not conflicting. Among them, *karma* performed with even a portion of passionate (*rājasic*) faith, covers *bhakti*. It is also an impediment to *bhakti* to produce love (*prema*) directly. However, there is another type of *karma* that doesn't cover *bhakti*. From this we see that the mixing of inferior types of *karma* eclipses pure *bhakti*, and it is categorised within the realm of *karma-miśra-bhakti*.⁹⁰

In this description *bhakti* mixed with *karma* is defined as separated into two divisions, one which masks *bhakti* and the other which does not. If *karma* covers *bhakti* it hinders the practice of *śuddha-bhakti*. This is known as *karma-miśra-bhakti*. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* proceeds to refer to Jīva Gosvāmī's BS 225, which outlines three types of this *karma-miśra-bhakti* which cover *bhakti*, he states: 'In this regard, there are three types of *bhakti* mixed with *karma* possible: (1) desiring sensual pursuits (2) desiring liberation (3) and desiring only *bhakti*.'⁹¹ The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* then offers the following comments on BS 225:

⁹⁰ ucyate bhakti-āvarakatvānāvarakatva-bhedena karmmaṇo vidyāt karma-miśratvam api dvidhaṃ bhavati, śuddha-bhaktitva-virodhi tad-avirodhi ca, tatra aṃśato 'pi rājasa-śraddhā-vihitaṃ karma bhakty-āvarakaṃ, bhakteḥ sāksāt-premotpādane pratibandhakaṃ | tad-anyaṭ tad-anāvarakaṃ tatrāvarakarmma-miśratvaṃ śuddha-bhakti-virodhi karmma-miśratva-vyavahāra-viṣayaś ca (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.12b & 13a)

⁹¹ (BS 225) tatra karmma-miśrā tri-vidhā saṃbhavati sakāmā kaivalya-kāmā bhakti-mātra-kāmā ca (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.13a)

So, in this way, even faith in *karma* arises partially for the person qualified for desiring only *bhakti* (because it is still a state of *karma-miśra*), which results in *bhakti* covered by *karma*, because of the intentional mixture of *karma*. Then, there would occur the covering of *karma* [whenever] there is such a mixed nature [then] how can pure *jñāna* or pure *bhakti* arise? Such doubt will appear. Thus, it is only faith in *karma*, although internal, that covers *bhakti* and not *karma* itself. Hence, in statements like ‘*anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam*’ and so on (in the definition of *bhakti*) it is not stated *bhakti* is devoid of *karma* and *jñāna*, it is only stated that it is not covered by them.⁹²

Three types of *karma-miśra-bhaktas* are described by Jīva Gosvāmī, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* highlights that even the third type, those who only desire *bhakti*, remain *karma-miśra-bhaktas* and thus *karma* still covers *bhakti*. However, the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* reassures the reader that there is indeed a *karma-bhakti* practice that doesn’t cover *bhakti* and thus faith in *karma* should not eclipse one’s faith in *bhakti*. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* refers to Rūpa Gosvāmī’s key verse in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.11⁹³ to verify this proposition as it highlights that *karma* should not cover *bhakti* (*anāvṛtam*) rather than the practice of *karma* having to be shunned entirely (*śūnyam*). Thus, these passages clarify the nature of *karma-miśra-bhakti*, and how this classification entails mixed faith in both *karma* and *bhakti*, however the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* reassures the reader that there is a *karma-bhakti* practice that does not jeopardize one’s status of *śuddha-bhakti* as long one’s faith resides solely in *bhakti* and not *karma*. Returning to the stages of progression for a *bhakta* in relation to *karma* according to the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, proceeding the *karma-miśra-bhakti* stage the following account is provided:

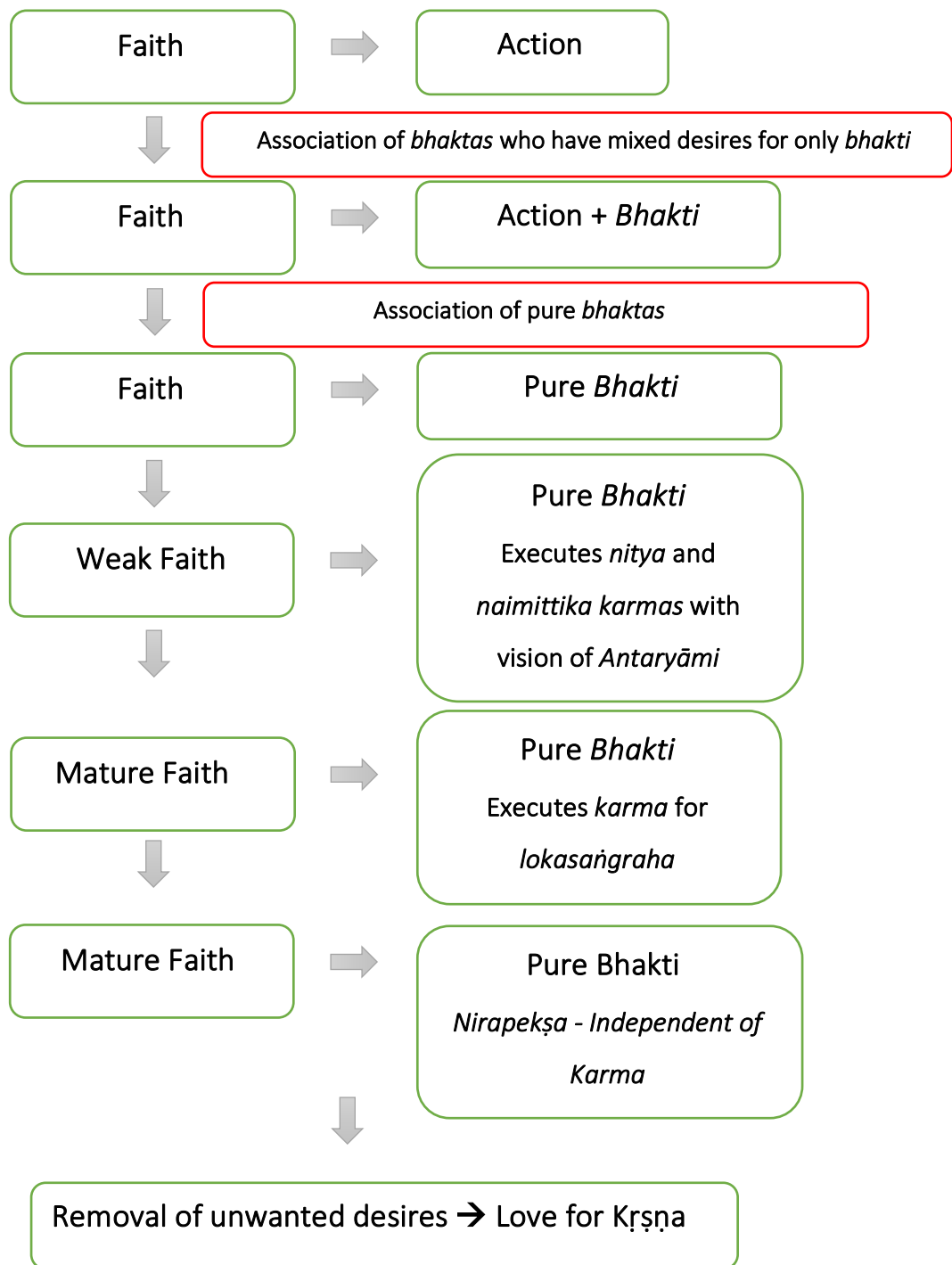
⁹² tad evaṃ bhakti-mātra-kāmādhikāriṇo 'py aṃśataḥ karmma-śraddhāpy upapāditā, tādrśa-karmma-miśratvābhiprāyeṇaiva karmmāvṛtatvam āpadyeteti tarhi sāṅkarṣye katham śuddhe jñāna-bhaktī pravarteyātām ity āśankā pravṛttir upapattavyā, tataś cāntarāto 'pi karmma-śraddhaiva bhakty-āvarikā na tu karmma, ata 'evānyā-bhilāṣitā-śūnyam' ity ādau jñāna-karmma-śūnyam ity anukṛtā jñāna-karmmādy-anāvṛtam ity evoktam, tataś cāvaraka-jñāna-karmmādi-śūnyam ity arthaḥ (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.13b)

⁹³ 'The highest devotion is continuous and devoted service to Kṛṣṇa performed in a favorable way. It is free of all other desires and unobscured by knowledge or activity. (*anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam bhaktir uttamā*)

Then, there is faith in pure *bhakti* due to the power of the association of pure *bhaktas*. From there, a [*bhakta*] of weak faith executes *bhakti* along with the execution of some *karma* in the form of *nitya* and *naimittika*, and some *karma* prescribed with the vision of *antaryāmi* (e.g. *agni-hotra*), Following which, a [*bhakta*] of mature faith executes *bhakti* along with the execution of *karma* according to what was earlier said, being dependent on benefiting the people of the world. From there, an independent [*bhakta*] executes pure *bhakti* from which shortly after the manifestation of love [for Kṛṣṇa] appears with the complete removal of unwanted desires. This is the qualification for pure *bhakti*.⁹⁴

This passage completes the concluding summary from the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*. Once again, the influence of the association of *bhaktas* is stressed to demonstrate how it elevates an individual to an advanced stage of practice. Furthermore, those either with weak or mature faith in pure *bhakti*, both engage in *karma*, however with varying motivations. The passage also describes the final goal for a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava, *prema* or love for Kṛṣṇa which is experienced by the independent *bhakta* or *nirapekṣa*. This chart illustrates the stages of progression described in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*:

⁹⁴ tataḥ śuddha-bhakta-saṅgādi-vaśāc chuddha-bhakti-śraddhā, tatas tatra mṛdute antaryāmi-drṣṭy-ādi-vihita-kiṃcit-karma-nitya-naimittika-rūpa-kiṃcit-karmānuṣṭhāna-sahita-bhakty-anuṣṭhānaṃ, tataḥ prauḍha-śraddhā tatra loka-saṃgrahāpekṣāyāṃ pūrva-rītyā yathāvāt-karmānuṣṭhāna-sahitaṃ bhakty-anuṣṭhānaṃ, tatas tatra nairapekṣe kevala-bhakty-anuṣṭhānaṃ, tato 'cirād eva samyag-anartha-nirasty-ādi-dvārā-raty-ādy āvirbhāva iti śuddha-bhakty-adhikāri (Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya, p.17a)



The tiered summary configured in the conclusion of the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* illustrates that both *bhakti* and *karma* can coexist under specific conditions of which guidelines have been provided extensively in the work. The crucial element that determines the quality of one's *bhakti* corresponds with where one's faith is reposed. Therefore, one should be conscious of one's

faithful disposition, and preserve its anchor in *bhakti*, consequently the external performance of *karma* is not fundamentally an impediment to the practice of pure *bhakti* in light of this theological reasoning. Hence, regardless of the degree of faith an individual possesses in *bhakti* if obliged to execute *karma*, one can safely engage in the practice, whilst keeping in mind the ultimate aspiration.

Having outlined the closing summary of *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, I will now proceed to disclose the concluding synopsis from the *Karma-vivṛti* of Kṛṣṇadeva, who states as the following:

This is the conclusion, those who have taken initiation from Viṣṇu, *brāhmaṇas* and others, need to operate diligently under the authority of *karma* before they become eligible for pure *bhakti*, for the sake of avoiding a calamity, and for the sake of pleasing the Lord, only complete work should be performed. This [execution of *karma*] would be *āropa-siddha-bhakti* or *saṅga-siddha-bhakti*.⁹⁵

As examined in the previous chapter the offering of *karma* to the Supreme is an authorized form of *bhakti* outlined by Jīva Gosvāmī in the *Bhakti-Sandarbhā* known as *āropa-siddha-bhakti* or *saṅga-siddha-bhakti*. This is the type of *karma* adopted upon initiation, the *Karma-vivṛti* further states in regard to this *karma* the following:

In that case also, it should be executed with a desire to attain pure *bhakti*, and not with any other desire. When in one arises the eligibility of a *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* with weak faith, for the sake of avoiding calamity, he should perform some *karma*, thinking oneself as a servant of the Lord, following his orders, he should execute only obligatory and occasional works (*nitya-* and *naimittika-karmas*). This is to be performed and offered to the Lord, however this should be performed only in the mood of a servant. And it is stated in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (8.409): ‘Thus one should offer one’s own *karma* and also one’s own

⁹⁵ *atrāyaṃ niṣkarṣaḥ, gr̥hīta-viṣṇu-dīkṣākair viprādibhiḥ śuddha-bhakty-adhikārāt prāk samyak-karmādhikāritvāt pratyavāya-parihārārthaṃ bhagavat-paritoṣaṅārthaṃ ca samyag eva karmānuṣṭheyam, tac cāropa-siddhā-rūpā-saṅga-siddhā-rūpaṃ vā,* (Monika Horstmann, p.279)

self to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, by being a servant, by chanting the mantra thrice.⁹⁶

Here Kṛṣṇadeva outlines the responsibilities of an individual who embarks on the path of *śuddha-bhakti*, at the stage of a *kaniṣṭha*. Such a person engages in only *nitya*- and *naimittika-karmas*, avoiding *kāmya-karmas* and so on, simultaneously meditating on one's identity as a servant of the Lord, in this way he advances steadily. The *Karma-vivṛti* further states:

However, when the eligibility of *uttama*- or *madhyama* status has arisen, with mature faith, one should perform *karma* to benefit the people of the world. Then, as king Ambarīṣa, one has to do all obligatory and occasional works like sacrifices for the sake of bringing joy to the Lord, by seeing Him within everything, and thinking this an execution of the order of the Lord. This is to be done by all.⁹⁷

When an individual attains mature faith the notion of *lokasaṅgraha* becomes the motivating factor for the execution of *karma*. One should also execute *karma* continually mindful of the Lord's omnipresence, considering the *karmas* to be the orders of the Lord bringing pleasure to him. Ambarīṣa Mahārāja is provided as the example to be followed. Ambarīṣa Mahārāja features in the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa*, where he is described as both the greatest emperor and the greatest *bhakta* of his time. Despite holding the position of a worldly king, he served the Supreme with unwavering determination and faith. His qualities are especially glorified in the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* in the relation to his dealings with Durvāsa Muni, a powerful *yogī*.⁹⁸ Kṛṣṇadeva continues:

⁹⁶ tatrāpi śuddha-bhakti-kāmanayā na tv anya-kāmanayā, jātāyāṃ komala-śraddhā-rūpa-kaniṣṭhādhikāritāyāṃ tu kiṃcit karmādhikāritvāt tādrśa-pratyavāya-parihārthaṃ dāsa-buddhyā bhagavad-ājñā-paripālana-buddhyā vā nitya-naimittika-rūpam eva, tad-anuṣṭheyam tad-arpanam tu dāsa-bhāvenaiva kartavyam uktaṃ ca, hari-bhakti-vilāse, tataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-pādābje dāsyenaiva samarpayet, tribhir mantraiḥ sva-karmāṇi sarvaṅy ātmānam apy atheti, (Monika Horstmann, p.279)

⁹⁷ jātāyāṃ praudha-śraddhā-rūpottama-madhyamādhikāritāyāṃ tu loka-sangrahārtham, tena bhagavat-prīty-arthaṃ ca antaryāmi-drṣṭyā bhagavad-ājñā-pālana-buddhyā ca yajñādikaṃ nitya-naimittikaṃ ca śrīmad-ambarīṣādivat, sarvam anuṣṭheyam (Monika Horstmann, p.280)

⁹⁸ According to the ninth book, fourth chapter of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, after committing an offense to Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, Durvāsa Muni was such a great ascetic and *yogī* that he travelled all over the material and spiritual worlds within a year and personally went to see Viṣṇu for the

In this way only, both one who is eligible for *rāgānugā-bhakti* mixed with *vaidhī*, when a strong taste has not arisen, and one who is eligible for mainly *rāgānugā-bhakti*, when a strong taste has arisen, have to perform all *karmas* for the sake of benefiting the people of the world. Specifically, the performance of *karma* for the sake of benefiting the people of the world by a person eligible for mainly *rāgānugā-bhakti* is to be done because it is common to all. It is with the vision that he is following the good behavior of the *rāgātmika-siddha-bhakta* who is his role model.⁹⁹

Kṛṣṇadeva's dedication to the promotion of *karma* is highlighted here, as he makes an unprecedented request; that even those who reach the highest stages of *bhakti*, *rāgānuga-bhakti* with taste, should continue to engage in *karma*. He also connects following the model of the *rāgātmika-siddha-bhakta*, with the execution of *karma* for the sake of benefiting the people of the world. This is a fascinating claim and likely to have been a response to the followers of Rūpa Kavirāja and similar individuals that were encouraging their followers to practice *rāgānuga-bhakti* in a way that disregarded rulings pertaining to orthodox forms of engagement such as *karma*. Kṛṣṇadeva's presentation sought to counteract the violation of codes of conduct generated by the imitation of the residents of Vṛndāvana such as the *gopīs* as per *rāgānuga-bhakti* practice. As discussed in chapter two the king faced a widespread problem within Vṛndāvana and Jaipur, concerning apparent *bhakti* practitioners imitating the residents of Vṛndāvana in dress, customs, behavior and so on, leading to disruptions in the social orders. Instead, Kṛṣṇadeva postulates that following the example of the *rāgātmika-siddha-bhaktas* rather necessitated the adoption of responsible orthodox practices defined by *karma* for the sake of others in the wider society.

protection of his life. However, Viṣṇu was unable to protect him because he had insulted King Ambarīṣa. Even though Ambarīṣa was a king, who engaged in various karmic rituals which he dedicated to the Lord, his position was shown to be more exalted than that of the renowned ascetic, Durvāsa.

⁹⁹ evam evājāta-dṛḍha-rucinā vaidha-miśra-rāgānugādhikāriṇā jāta-dṛḍha-rucinā mukhya-rāgānugādhikāriṇāpi loka-saṃgrahārthaṃ samyag eva sarva-manuṣṭheyam, mukhya-rāgānugādhikāriṇā tu tatra loka-saṃgrahārtha-karma-karaṇasya sarva-sādhāraṇatvāt, svānugamyamāna-rāgātmika-siddha-bhakta-sadācārānugati-dṛṣṭyeti viśeṣaḥ (Monika Horstmann, p.280)

Recalling Rūpa Gosvāmī's key verse on this issue described in BRS 2.295,¹⁰⁰ the intentions of Rūpa Gosvāmī indicated within this verse were a matter of contention. The conspicuous dearth of further clarification upon this verse from its creator invited numerous clashing interpretations.¹⁰¹ Kṛṣṇadeva, Jaisingh's trustworthy aide had been tasked to refute the explanations of Rūpa Kavirāja in the courts of Jaipur. Upon Kṛṣṇadeva's successful rebuttal, Rūpa Kavirāja's works were considered unlawful and forbidden in Jaipur and Vṛndāvana. Thus, in the *Karma-vivṛti* we further observe Kṛṣṇadeva continuing his refutation of Rūpa Kavirāja's problematic stance. In this case, Kṛṣṇadeva stresses that the principle of *lokasaṅgraha* should be adopted even at the highest stages of *bhakti*, hence one should embrace *karma* outwardly and this is indeed considered imitating the *rāgātmika-siddha-bhakta*. This also resembles Kṛṣṇadeva's earlier claim that the notion of *lokasaṅgraha* is not only the concern of *bhaktas* that are householders but of all members of the various *aśramas*, even those who were ascetically inclined or even those possibly beyond the *varṇāśrama* systems, practicing primarily *rāgānuga-bhakti* practice such as the *bābājīs* of Vṛndāvana. Through such declarations we can infer that Kṛṣṇadeva under the influence of Jaisingh broadened the scope of *lokasaṅgraha* or public responsibility, so that all members within Jaisingh's domains were compelled to heed to the responsibility of engaging in orthodox prescribed acts of *varṇāśrama* defined by the path of *karma*, even at the very highest stages of *bhakti*. This table summarizes Kṛṣṇadeva's above comments:

Type of <i>Bhakta</i>	Faith in <i>Bhakti</i>	Karma
Neophyte Vaiṣṇava ¹⁰²	Very Weak	Execute <i>karma</i> and offer to <i>karma</i> to the supreme as <i>āropa-siddha-bhakti</i> or <i>saṅga-siddha bhakti</i>

¹⁰⁰The one desirous of attaining one of the emotional states of the Vrajaloka should do performative acts of service (*sevā*) in a manner which imitates the Vrajaloka with both the "perfected body" (*siddha-rūpa*) and the "practitioner's body" (*sādhaka-rūpa*)' (Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p.96)

¹⁰¹ Viśvanātha also contributed to this debate claiming that the literal imitation of the residents of Vṛndāvana is strictly confined to the mental sphere and not the public arena, and rather the external imitation should be that of Rūpa Gosvāmī and others like him who were perfected beings, engaging in *vaidhi-bhakti*.

¹⁰² Kṛṣṇadeva makes the distinction between one who has just taken Vaiṣṇava initiation and a *kaniṣṭha-bhakta*, in the opening of this passage. (Monika Horstmann, p.279)

<i>Kaniṣṭha</i>	Weak	Execute <i>Nitya/Naimittika-karma</i> only with desire to attain pure <i>bhakti</i> , in the spirit of a servant of the Lord e.g. HBV 8.409
<i>Madhyama/Uttama</i>	Mature	Execute <i>karma</i> for the sake of benefiting the people of the world. For the sake of pleasing the Lord and executing his order whilst seeing the Lord within everything e.g. King <i>Ambarīṣa</i>
<i>Rāgānuga-bhakti</i> mixed with <i>vaidhī</i> with no taste and even with strong taste	“ “	Execute <i>karma</i> for the sake of benefiting the people of the world, thus, following the good behavior of the <i>rāgātmika-siddha-bhakta</i> who is his role model

In both the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and the *Karma-vivṛti*, the promotion of the practice of *karma* as a central feature for public responsibility irrespective of the level of *bhakti* an individual has attained is stressed. These works accomplish this task by profusely referring to the authoritative teachings of Jīva Gosvāmī, an influential figure to the readers of these respective texts. The *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* reassures the *bhakti* practitioner that as long as one’s faith is not concealed by *karma* then one has not in any way compromised their standing as a pure *bhakta* even at the most advanced stages. Thus, the execution of *karma* in of itself does not impede one’s progress on the *bhakti* path. Kṛṣṇadeva’s proposal that the notion of public responsibility to benefit the wider society by executing *karma* extends to even one practicing *rāgānuga-bhakti* and his claim that this follows the ideal set by the *rāgātmika-siddha-bhaktas*, symptomizes the obligation to adopt *karma* and adhere to orthodox forms of public conduct within this era, stemming from pressures emanating from the politico-religious verdicts established in Jaipur. Consequently, works like the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and the *Karma-vivṛti* became timely theological devices to define and expand public responsibility in response to the mounting concerns surrounding public engagement in this period.

Conclusion

The scarcity of works pertaining to the precise role of *karma* in the public sphere within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect appeared to indicate the lack of interest or concern over responsible public engagement. However, in this era we witness the production of specialized works such as the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* which strives to provide sound theological reasoning to endorse conscientious public conduct. In this chapter, primarily through the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* I traversed several significant and interrelated themes that encompass features of public theology. Having established the compatibility of *karma* and *bhakti*, and how *karma* functions as a pathway to *bhakti*, it became apparent that devotion to Kṛṣṇa, the ultimate objective of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, was in no way contingent upon the enactment of social duties. It was also agreed that the defining quality of the path of *bhakti*, is faith or *śraddhā* which qualifies one to abandon *karma* and it was established that this *śraddhā* is only attained by the grace of the pure and advanced *bhaktas*. Nevertheless, in consideration of principles such as *lokasaṅgraha* and the theological significance of adhering to moral and behavioral norms, even the advanced *bhakta* must participate responsibly in the mundane world for the sake of others without fundamentally violating one's commitment to *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. These novel compilations produced in this era reassure *bhakti* practitioners that partaking in *karma* does not disrupt one's progress in *bhakti* which is determined solely by where one's faith is disposed and subsequently provides precautionary measures and guidelines to ensure that one's faith resides only within *bhakti*. This perspective indicates that socially active Vaiṣṇavas should endure the less than ideal circumstances in the mundane sphere, complying with customs pertaining to *karma* even though these may be deemed to be intrinsically bereft of *bhakti* in and of themselves. Thus, *bhaktas* are expected to act astutely and responsibly, discerning the demands of public responsibility in whatever environment they may discover themselves bound within.

Central to the *karma* and *varṇāśrama* promoted by the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* is the conviction that pure *bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate purpose of life culminating in *prema* or love for Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, although *bhakti* ultimately overrides *varṇāśrama-dharma*, there is nevertheless a form of *varṇāśrama-dharma* that operates in conjunction with *bhakti* even at its highest stages without compromising one's ambitions on the *bhakti* path. Although, the Gauḍīyas Vaiṣṇava sect had elected not to entirely dismiss the *varṇāśrama* scheme, however nor were they especially strong advocates of it. However, in this period due to political pressures, sects were compelled to acknowledge *karma's* utility. To avoid possible reprimands the Gauḍīyas Vaiṣṇava sect were compelled to accede to the outward customs of *varṇāśrama* wherever and so long as these demarcated the prevailing social orders in the public arena. This reconfiguration of public

behavior was spurred on by cases such as that of Rūpa Kavirāja which exemplified why the *varṇāśrama* system became significant in this period as it demonstrated that premature renunciation and improper imitation of the residents of Vṛndāvana would inevitably lead to moral impropriety in the guise of treading the *bhakti* path. Consequently, in this period it was deemed that *bhakti* practice would have fared better had individuals honestly pursued the path of *bhakti* within the safe confines of the *varṇāśrama* system.

Chapter 5 - Gītā commentaries of Viśvanātha and Baladeva

Introduction

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is perhaps the most well-known and often quoted text in the Hindu tradition. Hindus of many persuasions today consider it the essence of all scriptures and sacred truth. Its influential status is undeniable, whether serving as a platform for cultural or religious propaganda, or as a symbol for political unification and mobilization during the colonial era, or as an inspiration for romantics and philosophers, or as a vehicle to drive global spiritual revolution and revitalization, the text has certainly attracted a wide spectrum of admirers. Consequently, numerous translations and commentaries have been produced. However, there remains two diverging views in academia concerning the role of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* for Hindus. Some modern scholars claim that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* became the central text for the Hindus only in recent history. Along with the construction of Hinduism as a unified 'religion' unavoidably the need for a central 'religious scripture' became an urgency. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* was among the texts vying and ultimately succeeding to be just that, the 'Hindu bible'. In other words, for Hinduism to conform to a Western notion of religion there was a need for a single central religious scripture comparable to the Qur'an or the Bible. In modern times, it is sometimes said that this text has come closer than any other in the whole of Indian literature to function formally as an instance of the imported concept of a 'scripture', essentially serving as an ecumenical text for Hinduism. In this respect, Eric Sharpe states that traditionally the *Bhagavad-Gītā* had originally only been accessible to the *Brahmins*, however from the early 1880s it rose to become the core text for all Hindus¹. In contrast, others such as Arvind Sharma contend that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* 'was always an important scripture'². Therefore, the question naturally arises, has the *Bhagavad-Gītā* always played an important role for Hinduism? Or in other words what has been the *Bhagavad-Gītā*'s reception historically?

Whatever the actual case, we find that the *Gītā* was employed by a wide range of individuals in their attempts to instigate social or spiritual change. At times in such cases the observer would be hard pressed to connect the text to the traditions concerned, such as with Kashmiri Shaivism or Shankara yet the text was deemed significant enough to be engaged with

¹ Eric J. Sharpe, *The Universal Gītā*, (London, 1985), p.67-69

² Arvind Sharma, *Hinduism*, (New York, 1993), p.33

for the purpose of bringing credibility to their teachings,³ in some cases at considerable effort to re-interpret and re-define the *Gīta's* meaning and implications. This suggests that it was a significant text amongst those they were in dialogue with and if one could demonstrate that their exposition was based on the text, then perhaps their teaching would gain wider acceptance. As such, it is therefore reasonable to presume that while it is possible and indeed probable that the irrefutable position of preeminence the *Gīta* now enjoys could have been a product of the historical movements of the modern era coupled with a trend toward globalization, nevertheless the text appears to have always been revered. It can therefore be inferred that the *Bhagavad-Gīta* always served as a fundamental text for many different religious and social groups throughout Indian history.

Gītā commentaries within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect

The reign of Jaisingh was characterized by reformation and standardization. Thus, this era spurred the creation of specialized treatises on topics such as *karma* under the supervision of the king who was concerned with bridging *bhakti* practice and the disseminated orthodox norms. In this historical setting, the first two commentaries on the *Gītā* by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava authors emerge. The *Gītā*, one of the most well-known works from the Hindu canon, has often been associated with action in the world. This text is therefore one of the most, if not the most, suitable texts within the Hindu tradition through which a theological basis for social and public interactions to be expounded. Considering the appeal of the *Gītā* throughout history, and particularly within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, it is certainly surprising that the school produced no commentary on the *Gītā* until approximately two hundred years after the tradition's inauguration by Caitanya. Indeed, it is only sometime between the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth-century that the first *Gītā* commentaries emerge,⁴ written by Viśvanātha Cakravartī, and subsequently his student, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, both key players in the eighteenth-century.

The dearth of a *Gītā* commentary until this period is remarkable considering the vast literary arsenal generated by the tradition's founders. Not even Jīva Gosvāmī, the most prolific

³ More can be found in Warriar, A.G. Krishna, *Srimad Bhagavad Gita Bhasya of Sri Shankaracarya*, (Madras 1983), p.1 and Sharma Arvind, *Gītārthasangraha Abhinavagupta*, (Leiden, 1983), p.10

⁴ Adrian Burton claims the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* was scribed and stored in the City Palace Library in Jaipur in 1709. So, the original by Viśvanātha may have been composed slightly before then (Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.9)

author in the tradition's history whom Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja estimates wrote 400,000 verses,⁵ offered any commentary on the *Gītā*. In fact, Jīva Gosvāmī appears to relegate the *Gītā* relative to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in his *Tattva-Sandarbhā*. In this text, he begins by explaining that knowledge acquired through direct perception or logic is faulty and hence not adequate in the pursuit of transcendental subjects. Rather, only *śabda*, or scriptural knowledge, can advance the pursuit of transcendental knowledge due to its *apauruṣeya* nature, or nonhuman source. Jīva proceeds to explain how the fifth Veda, namely the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*, are as divine as the four traditionally accepted Vedas, and are more suitable for understanding truth. Of these, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is considered the most superior because of its *sattva* nature, and he declares it the essence of all the Vedas.⁶ He also quotes the dissatisfaction of Vyāsa in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* after having compiled the *Māhābhārata*, a dissatisfaction which invokes the authorship of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. In this way, he illustrates the superior position of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* over the *Gītā*, which forms a central part of the *Māhābhārata*.

We also notice that Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* received much praise from the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, while his commentary on the *Gītā* is for the most part overlooked. In fact, Jīva and Sanatāna Gosvāmī, both leading teachers of the tradition, generated their unique commentaries on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* despite the existence of Śrīdhara Svāmī's revered commentary, the *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*, yet they and others made no effort to do so in spite of his less revered *Gītā* commentary. This seems to demonstrate that the *Gītā* was not a central concern for the tradition in its early formation.

Joseph O'Connell suggests that the reason for this apparent negligence is that the *Gītā* does not appear to provide sufficient precedence to *bhakti* over *karma* and *jñāna*.⁷ He further adds that the *Gītā* offers no reference to the activities of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndavana or the mode of devotion displayed in Vṛndavana, which is the pinnacle pursuit for the tradition and the subject of much of its textual contributions. Therefore, the tradition placed their doctrinal focus on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the *Sandarbhās* and *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* rather than works like the *Gītā*. It should be noted however that this apparent negligence did not provoke a complete dismissal of the text as it was still utilized when validating facts and conclusions, such as observed in the works of both Jīva Gosvāmī and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja. Nevertheless, the first time we witness the *Gītā*

⁵ (CC 3.4.222) p.839

⁶ *Tattva-Sandarbhā* (9-23)

⁷ Joseph O'Connell, "Karma in the Bhagavad-Gita: Caitanya Vaiṣṇava views", *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* 3.2, (1995), p.92

receiving significant attention from the tradition is from Viśvanātha Chakravartī who compiled the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī*, a Sanskrit commentary upon the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and in quick succession his student Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa who wrote the *Gītā-bhūṣaṇa*, his own unique stand on the *Gītā*. What led to this unexpected proliferation of commentaries on the text when their predecessors had not felt it to be required? Why did the text become a focus for the Vaiṣṇava tradition at this time?

Viśvanātha Chakravartī compiled his commentary on the *Gītā*, known as the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī*, ‘the shower of essential meanings’, as a mendicant in Vṛndavana. This as well as being a curious divergence from the tradition’s typical literary efforts, was also a divergence from Viśvanātha’s own literary trajectory. Unlike many traditional Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava works, the *Gītā* outlines duties and responsibilities for those who are not renunciates, aiding those in public positions on both a personal and social level. Considering his position as a mendicant concerned with the highest stages of *bhakti* practice and with his primary audience being similarly positioned, it appears to be an anomaly. Furthermore, we already observed that in his *Karmavivṛti*, Kṛṣṇadeva criticizes Viśvanātha’s presentation of *karma* found in his *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* commentary where Viśvanātha appears to dismiss the value of *karma* in light of the practice of *bhakti*, so in regard to a text like the *Gītā* which devotes substantial portions of content to discussions on *karma* one would expect it to be avoided or solely the recipient of criticism in favor of *bhakti* from Viśvanātha. However, Viśvanātha’s later *Gītā* commentary⁸ appears to be far more compatible with Kṛṣṇadeva’s position on *karma* and the accommodation of *karma* in general. Thus, in the course of this analysis, I will explore Viśvanātha’s specific contributions to the promotion of *karma*, or action as a *yogic* path leading to purification, to substantiate whether he is targeting or empowering those in public positions, and to evaluate whether this evidence can be used to help us formulate the tradition’s position in relation to a member’s role in the public or political arena.

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa was also a prolific author and it is quite intriguing that he considered it necessary to write a commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, when shortly before his teacher, Viśvanātha, wrote a commentary. Although, it is curious that Baladeva considered it necessary to write a commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, so soon after Viśvanātha, nevertheless, by examining his commentary, the *Gītā-bhūṣaṇa*, ‘the ornament of the *Gītā*’, Baladeva offers unique explanations which help to further elucidate on Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology, whilst

⁸ Adrian Burton claims the *Sārārtha-darśinī* was scribed and placed in the City Palace Museum of Jaipur in 1704, and likewise the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* in 1709 (Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.9)

remaining consistent with principle concepts in Viśvanātha’s presentation. Unique to his presentation is the influence of Madhvācārya’s teachings. As I have already described, it is well-known that he contributed to the defense of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect stemming from political pressures in Jaipur, in particular legitimizing the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect by offering a commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras* synergizing Mādhva and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachings, which also addressed the mandatory requirement of aligning the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* with one of the four traditionally recognized Vaiṣṇava lines.

Considering the sudden conspicuous entrance of the text into the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition’s literary corpus and the lack of explicit motive offered by the authors, it is worth exploring the reasons for its appearance and the unique contribution it offered to the tradition. Especially in light of the influence of Jaisingh on not just the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, but all religious communities within his domain. Furthermore, according to records from the Jaipur courts Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, along with his Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava colleague Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma were intimately involved in participating in the Jaipur courts, and responded to the pressures born from debates and discussions held in the courts. I will examine whether the *Gītā* commentaries endorse and promote the practice of *bhakti* within the public domain, and perhaps the tradition used the commentaries to affect a strategic shift in the tradition’s approach to engagement in the public sphere, spurred on by the political pressures in Jaipur and in response to antagonistic religious groups vying for royal patronage. Furthermore, considering the *Gītā*’s growing prestige and its inclusion in the revered *prasthāna-traya* (encompassing three key canonical texts of Vedānta - the *Upaniṣads*, the *Brahma-sūtras* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*), it was incumbent upon the tradition’s leaders to offer an opposing commentary to those of competing traditions in order to protect the tradition’s relevancy and authenticity. Therefore, Baladeva’s *Gītā-bhūṣaṇa* may have been considered an accompaniment to his *Govinda-bhāṣya* on the *Brahma-sūtras*, to complete the *prasthāna-traya* contribution from him on behalf of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas as a Vedāntin scholar. Whatever the actual reason, it is evident that Viśvanātha as well as his prominent junior associates like Kṛṣṇadeva and Baladeva were becoming especially sensitive to public concerns, and it is no stretch of the imagination to presume that the texts they produced were in response to the tidings of their time.

Various scholars have already offered insights into the motivations behind Viśvanātha’s commentary on the *Gītā*. Adrian Burton describes how the king was concerned about the relevancy and accessibility of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachings and practices in the prevailing and emerging social climate, and he frequently questioned his adviser Kṛṣṇadeva on the subject. In particular, he inquired whether the *bhaktas* of Caitanya were free to practice *karma-yoga*, or

whether such practice was fundamentally inconsistent with their spiritual ideals. Kṛṣṇadeva responded with an accommodating position that supported social engagement and appeased the king. In Adrian Burton’s view Kṛṣṇadeva’s accommodating attitude had already been outlined by Viśvanātha in his commentary on the *Gītā*.⁹ Joseph O’ Connel offers further ammunition to reinforce this view, suggesting that Viśvanātha’s commentary is indicative of an implicit policy of flexibility and freedom for the Vaiṣṇava community as it facilitated the fostering of devotion while participating in domestic and public affairs.¹⁰ It is likely therefore that Viśvanātha’s composition embodied a development in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition in response to the changing socio-political climate of that period, and the *Gītā* was a specific tool employed by a flexible tradition to connect the socially and politically engaged to the path of *bhakti*. This position offers solace and encouragement to the devout *bhakti* practitioner bound by social responsibility. It also provided flexibility for a king who was responsible for the governance of a culturally diverse population that was home to a variety of adversary traditions. I will proceed to explore Viśvanātha’s commentary and to further analyze this perspective I will also examine Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s composition to deduce whether it also advocates the practice of *karma* as a feature of public responsibility. As will be demonstrated, regardless of the authors’ private motivations, their commentaries successfully provide a critical insight into the tradition’s position on social and public engagement.

Relationship between *karma* and *bhakti* according to Viśvanātha

To begin I will examine Viśvanātha’s perspective on *karma-bhakti* relations according to his *Gītā* commentary, the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā*. Considering Viśvanātha’s apparent disregard for *karma* according to his comments on important passages of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* explored earlier in the thesis, it is unsurprising, that Viśvanātha’s support of *karma* is far less pronounced than his promotion of *bhakti* in the *Gītā*. However, I would propose that in the case of his *Gītā* commentary, Viśvanātha provides significant endorsement for the adoption of *karma* although *bhakti*’s superior status is never compromised. His promotion of *karma* in the *Gītā* is particularly accentuated in light of the passages from Viśvanātha in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* that I examined earlier.

⁹ Burton, *Temples, Texts and Taxes*, p.71

¹⁰ O’ Connell, “*Karma in the Bhagavad-Gītā*”, p.104

Bhakti gives life to karma

The exemplary status of *bhakti* is described by Viśvanātha from the offset of his *Gītā* commentary. According to Viśvanātha, *bhakti* plays a central and special role in the *Gītā*. Indeed, in his opening statements of his *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* in which he describes the structure of the *Gītā*, he portrays *bhakti*'s unique and exalted position as follows:

There [in the *Gītā*], among [those chapters], the first six chapters [of the *Gītā*] explain *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, the second six chapters explain *bhakti-yoga* and the third six chapters explain *jñāna-yoga*. Even among them [i.e. among the three types of *yoga*], *bhakti* is placed in the middle between *karma* and *jñāna* because it is extremely mysterious, greatly honored, difficult to attain, and gives life to the other two. *Karma* and *jñāna* without *bhakti* are useless, these two are accepted only when they are mixed with *bhakti*.¹¹

Here, *bhakti*'s exceptional and superior role in comparison to *karma* and *jñāna* is outlined, asserting that it is *bhakti* only that gives life and worth to both the *karma* and *jñāna* processes. *Bhakti*'s superior status is further described in Viśvanātha's comments to BG 2.40:

Only *bhakti* is beyond the three material qualities, and a person transcends these material qualities only by practicing *bhakti*, whereas *jñāna* and *karma* are not beyond the material qualities due to the influence of the material qualities of goodness and passion respectively. The *bhakti* element in *karma* offered to the Supreme, makes *karma* lose its uselessness, and causes fruits.¹²

¹¹ tatrādhyāyānāṃ ṣaṭkena prathamena niṣkāma-karma-yogaḥ | dvitīyena bhakti-yogaḥ | tṛtīyena jñāna-yogo darśitaḥ | tatrāpi bhakti-yogasyāti-rahasyatvād ubhaya-sañjīvakatvenābhyarhitatvāt sarva-durlabhatvāc ca madhyavartīkṛtaḥ | karma-jñānayoḥ bhakti-rāhityena vaiyarthyaṭ te dve bhakti-miśra eva sammatīkṛte |

¹² nistraiguṇyo bhavārjuna ity ukter bhakter eva triguṇātītatvāt tayaiva puruṣo nistraiguṇyo bhavātīty ekādaśa-skandhe prasiddheḥ | jñāna-karmaṇoḥ tu sāttvikatva-rājasatvābhyāṃ nistraiguṇyatvānupapatter bhagavad-arpita-lakṣaṇā bhaktis tu karmaṇo vaiphalyābhāva-mātram pratipādayati,

In effect, these two passages proclaim that *karma* only becomes effective when combined or connected with *bhakti*. These passages exemplify the special position of *bhakti* and the role it plays in empowering the practice of *karma*. *Bhakti's* superior position in relation to *karma* is also further clarified in Viśvanātha's comments to BG 18.63:

These three sections consisting of six chapters, the splendid *Gītā* scripture, the crown jewel of all knowledge, is [compared to] the box containing *bhakti* which is the greatest secret [and] invaluable. The first six chapters about *karma*, forms the lower closure of the box made of gold. The final chapters about *jñāna*, forms the upper lid made of gold, decorated with jewels. *Bhakti* in the six chapters between these two [i.e. the *karma* and the *jñāna* sections] shines beautifully, [*bhakti*] which is considered invaluable in the three worlds, subjugating the splendid Kṛṣṇa and which is the most excellent precious jewel [of *bhakti*].¹³

Through the creative usage of the analogy of a decorated box enclosing treasure, the relationship between *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* is metaphorically depicted. *Karma* and *jñāna* form the upper and lower seals of the box, and within the box lies the treasure of *bhakti*. Once again Viśvanātha demonstrates *bhakti's* special position relative to other paths. By these examples, Viśvanātha stresses the prominence of *bhakti* within the *Gītā*.

Jurisdiction of *karma* for a *bhakti* practitioner

Having established *bhakti's* superior position in relation to *karma* and *karma's* dependence on *bhakti* for its efficacy according to Viśvanātha, I will now illustrate his perspective on the extent of a *bhakti* practitioner's responsibility to *karma* according to his *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā*. I will also examine whether he endorses the positions delineated in the *Karma-vivṛti* and *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* such as the requirement of prescribed *karma* for those who have yet to reach the stage

¹³ ṣaṭka-trikam idaṃ sarva-vidyā-śiro-ratnaṃ śrī-gītā-śāstraṃ mahānarghya-rahasyatama-bhakti-samputaṃ bhavati | prathamam karma-ṣaṭkaṃ yasyādhāra-pidhānaṃ kānakam bhavati | antyam jñāna-ṣaṭkaṃ yasyottara-pidhānaṃ maṇi-jaṭitaṃ kānakam bhavati | tayor madhyavarti-ṣaṭka-gatā bhaktis trijagad-anarghyā śrī-kṛṣṇa-vaśīkāriṇī mahāmaṇi-matallikā virājate, yasyaḥ paricārikā tad-uttara-pidhānārdha-gatā man-manā bhava ity ādi pada-dvayī catuḥ-ṣaṣṭhy-akṣarā śuddhā bhavātīti budhyate

of firm or mature faith in *bhakti*. This investigation will be particularly interesting in light of his comments on the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* explored earlier which seemingly suggest that a *bhakti* practitioner can abandon *karma* from the very beginning of his *bhakti* practice, which stands in opposition to the claims outlined in the *Karma-vivṛti* and *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, namely that *kaniṣṭha-bhaktas* or novice *bhaktas* with weak faith retain an obligation to execute *karma* according to *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

Firstly, let us return to Viśvanātha's perspective outlined in his comments to BG 3.2¹⁴, where in Arjuna states the following, 'You bewilder my intelligence with your mixed instructions. Therefore, speak one thing, having decided how I can attain a better condition'.¹⁵ In response to this verse Viśvanātha comments as follows:

O friend Arjuna, it is true that *bhakti*, beyond the material qualities is best of all. However, that [*bhakti*] is gained by the grace of the great one-pointed *bhaktas* of me by fortune, it is not gained through human efforts. Therefore, be free from the three material qualities (goodness, passion and ignorance) by *bhakti* to me which is free from material qualities, certainly, I have given this blessing to you. And when this [blessing] ripens, then you will gain the fortunate grace of the one-pointed *bhaktas*. However, at this moment, you are qualified for *karma*.¹⁶

In this passage Viśvanātha declares that one should not abandon *karma* prematurely, a position lying in contrast to his statements on verse BP 1.5.17 which having been discussed earlier suggest that a *bhakti* practitioner is eligible to abandon *karma* from the very beginning of *bhakti* practice. In his *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā* however he appears to discourage the exclusive practice of *bhakti* in the initial stages as one is not qualified to adopt that path solely, and rather recommends the practice of *karma* as an intermediary path to *bhakti* until one attains the grace of the advanced

¹⁴ As also referred to in chapter three of this thesis

¹⁵ vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena buddhiṃ mohayasīva me, tad ekaṃ vada niścītya yena śreyo 'ham āpnuyām

¹⁶ bho vayasya arjuna satyaṃ guṇātītā bhaktiḥ sarvotkṛṣṭaiva, kintu sā yādṛcchika-mad-aikāntaika-mahā-bhakta-kṛpaika-labhyatvāt puruṣodyama-sādhyā na bhavati, ata eva nistraiguṇyo bhava guṇātītayā mad-bhaktiyā tvaṃ nistraiguṇyo bhūyā ity āśīrvāda eva dattaḥ, sa ca yadā phaliṣyati tadā tādrśa-yādṛcchikaikāntika-bhakta-kṛpayā prāptām api lapsyase, sāmprataṃ tu karmaṇy evādhikāras te iti

bhaktas. This viewpoint resembles positions in the *Karma-vivṛti* and *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* which propagate the necessity of an early *bhakti* practitioner to observe regulations pertaining to *karma*. Thus, Viśvanātha in this instance, suggests that there is a qualification required to relinquish prescribed *karma* for a *bhakti* practitioner and this qualification is dispensed by advanced *bhaktas*, so until that point one is required to continue to execute prescribed *karmas*. This reading presents a degree of ambiguity in regard to Viśvanātha's position on the role of *karma* in the early stages of *bhakti* practice in light of his comments delineated in *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* verses such as BP 1.5.17. However, this ambiguity is further compounded in reference to a passage offered by Viśvanātha later in the same chapter in BG 3.26. Indeed, Viśvanātha's comments here resembles his reading of BP 1.5.17, indeed, in his comments to the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* verse, BG 3.26 is referenced to substantiate his stance. The BG 3.26 states the following, 'The ignorant who are attached to *karma*, you should not produce doubt [in them], the wise man engages in executing *karma* [himself], causing them to engage in all *karma*.'¹⁷ Viśvanātha asserts that this verse is describing *karma-jñāna* relations, and one who is impure should continue to operate within the framework of *karma* until thoroughly purified and thus, qualified to adopt *jñāna*. Following this, a critical passage from the *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* is presented, BP 6.9.50 which indicates that one shouldn't recommend *karma* to the ignorant as its counterproductive to reaching the ultimate goal just as a physician does not give a patient something unfavourable even if he desires it.¹⁸ To reconcile these opposing views, Viśvanātha provides the following response:

[BP 6.9.50 is] True, but this is in regard to the matter of teaching about *bhakti*, and it is not contradictory with regard to teaching about *jñāna* because *jñāna* is dependent on the purification of the heart and that [purity of heart] is dependent on the execution of *karma* without desires. But *bhakti* is independent due to its strength and is not dependent on the extent of the purity of heart. If it is possible to produce faith in *bhakti*, then doubt can be produced even though they

¹⁷ na buddhi-bhedaṁ janayed ajñānāṁ karma-saṅginām | joṣayet sarva-karmāṇi vidvān yuktaḥ samācaran

¹⁸ svayaṁ niḥśreyasaṁ vidvān na vakty ajñāya karma hi | na rāti rogiṇo 'pathyaṁ vāñchato 'pi bhiṣaktamaḥ

are engaged in *karma*. For those that have faith in *bhakti*, there is no jurisdiction of *karma*.¹⁹

Viśvanātha refers to BP 11.20.9, BP 11.11.32, BG 18.66 and BP 1.5.17 to substantiate his view, verses that we have observed before illustrating *bhakti*'s powerful and independent nature. This passage in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* mirrors those *Bhagāvata Purāṇa* passages seen earlier by Viśvanātha that appear to dismiss the relevance of *karma* for even a novice *bhakti* practitioner. Thus, according to Viśvanātha due to the independent power of *bhakti*, *karma* can be abandoned from the very beginning, however a caveat is offered in Viśvanātha's comments to BG 3.26. *Karma* is only possible to abandon, if in that instance faith in *bhakti* is possible to be produced as indicated by the expression '*bhaktau śraddhām utpādayitum śaknuyāt*'. Nothing more is said about the precise nature of that faith, particularly for our purposes whether it is weak or firm faith. Therefore, although we witness Viśvanātha indicating that *bhakti* practitioners should not abandon *karma* until properly qualified, nevertheless he still extols the independent power of *bhakti* to enable the abandonment of *karma* even at the very initial stages.

Now, if nothing more was offered by Viśvanātha on the role of *karma*, we could safely conclude that the practice of *karma* is superfluous in the midst of the greatness of *bhakti*, however in several other instances in the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī*, which I will share, he explicitly recommends the practice of *karma* as a stepping stone, for one who is not qualified for *ananya-bhakti*. Furthermore, the *karma* practice encouraged by Viśvanātha is not the standard *karma* practice, but uniquely infused with *bhakti* as illustrated in BG 9.27, where in Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna, 'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer and whatever you give away, as well as whatever austerities you execute, son of Kuntī, they should be performed as an offering for Me.'²⁰ In Viśvanātha's comments he presents Kṛṣṇa's intentions with the following instructions:

¹⁹ satyam | tat khalu bhakty-upadeṣṭṛka-viṣayam idaṃ tu jñānopadeṣṭṛka-viṣayam ity avirodhaḥ | jñānasyāntaḥkaraṇa-śuddhy-adhīnatvāt | tac chuddhes tu niṣkāma-karmādhīnatvāt, bhaktes tu svataḥ prābalyād antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi-paryantānapekṣatvāt | yadi bhaktau śraddhām utpādayitum śaknuyāt, tadā karminām buddhi-bhedam api janayet, bhaktau śraddhāvatām karmānadhikārāt

²⁰ yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam

Considering, O Arjuna, since presently you are not able to abandon *karma*, *jñāna* and so on, and not eligible for pure unalloyed *bhakti* which is supreme, and also not eligible for the lower *sakāma-bhakti*. Therefore, you should execute primarily *bhakti* mixed with *karma* and *jñāna*, but which is free from desires.²¹ Whatever action you perform i.e. whether performing Vedic action or whether performing worldly action, whatever you consume i.e. food or drink and so on... according to worldly life, whatever you do, whatever austerities you perform, offer all only to me. It should be said that this is neither *bhakti-yoga* nor *niškāma-karma-yoga*. By *niškāma-karma-yoga* one only offers actions to the Lord outlined in the scriptures, however not worldly actions. This is observed by everyone.²²

Although in this case Viśvanātha encourages the practice of *karma*, the nature of the offering differs to the practice of the standard *niškāma-karma-yoga*. Viśvanātha states that *karmas* should be executed so that all actions are offered to the Lord and not just *karmas* pertaining to one's position in the *varṇāśrama* system. Therefore, the offering is to be conducted in the spirit of *bhakti* with a slight mixture of *karma*, namely *karma-miśra-pradhānī-bhūtā-bhakti*. This illustrates that even though Viśvanātha accommodates *karma* in his *Gītā* commentary, the spirit of selfless *bhakti* is incorporated within the *karma* offerings and further displays his intentions to bring individuals to the path of pure *bhakti* as quickly as possible. To further explore the notion of *karma-miśra-pradhānī-bhūtā-bhakti*, I will examine other passages found in the *Sarārtha-varṣini* on this matter.

Viśvanātha also describes the characteristics of the *karma-miśra-bhakta* in BG 18.56, declaring that he is not even a *niškāma-bhakta*, for he performs all actions - *nitya*, *naimittika*, *kāmya-karmas*, and even worldly activities, characterized by the protection of son, wife, and so

²¹ apekṣāyām bho arjuna sāmpratam tāvat tava karma-jñānādīnām tyaktum asakyatvāt sarvotkṛṣṭāyām kevalāyām ananya-bhaktau nādhikāro nāpi nikṛṣṭāyām sakāma-bhaktau, tasmāt tvam niškāmām karma-jñāna-miśrām pradhānī-bhūtām eva bhaktim kurv ity āha yat karoṣīti dvābhyām

²² laukikam vaidikam vā yat karma tvam karoṣi, yad aśnāsi vyavahārato bhojana-pānādikam yat karoṣi tat tapasyasi tapah karoṣi tat sarvam mayy evārpaṇam yasya tad yathā syāt tathā kuru, na cāyam niškāma-karma-yoga eva na tu bhakti-yoga iti vācyam, niškāma-karmibhiḥ śāstra-vihitam karmaiva bhagavatya arpyate, na tu vyavahārikam kim api kṛtam, tathaiva sarvatra drṣṭeḥ

on.²³ This reinforces the type of *karma* promoted by Viśvanātha in BG 9.27, bolstering the appeal that all actions should be offered to the Lord not just prescribed *karmas* outlined in the Vedas. Due to the dominance of *bhakti* in this combination of *karma* and *bhakti*, all *karmas* are offered. Indeed, Viśvanātha also states therefore this is known as *bhakti* mixed with *karma* rather than *karma* mixed with *bhakti*.²⁴ Therefore these descriptions offer insights into the precise nature of *karma-miśra-bhakti*, distinguishing the practice from *niskāma-karma*, by the offering of all *karmas* and with *bhakti* being the principal component in the practice.

The *karma-miśra-bhakta* is also designated to be an intermediate *bhakta*, a transitional stage between the lowest and highest junctures of *bhakti* as depicted in Viśvanātha’s comments in BG 18.57. In this passage, Viśvanātha presents Arjuna’s uncertainty regarding his identity amongst the varying classifications of *bhaktas*, specifically as an *ananya-bhakta* or a *sakāma-bhakta* or a *bhakta* with selfish desires or not,²⁵ Viśvanātha presents Kṛṣṇa’s response as follows:

In this regard, you do not have the strength to become an *ananya-bhakta* who is all-magnificent, you are also not a *sakāma-bhakta* which is the most inferior amongst all *bhaktas*. However, you are an intermediate *bhakta*, consequently you should offer all *karmas*, duties of your own *āśrama* and worldly *karmas* to me.²⁶

In Viśvanātha’s comments, BG 9.27 is also referenced to further define the ‘intermediate *bhakta*’. In light of Viśvanātha’s comments, the *karma-miśra-bhakta* is denoted as an intermediate position between that of the unalloyed *bhakta* (*ananya-bhakta*) and the *bhakta* with material desires (*sakāma-bhakta*). Thus, the *karma-miśra-bhakti* stage is a platform from which to attain

²³ so ‘pi kiṃ punar niṣkāma-bhakta ity arthaḥ | sarva-karmāṇy api nitya-naimittika-kāmyāni putrakalatrādi-poṣaṇa-lakṣaṇāni vyavahārikāṇy api sarvāṇi kurvāṇaḥ

²⁴ He claims in his comments to BG 18.56 the prefix ‘*ā*’ (in the term *āśrayate*) indicates the dominance of service, whereas the usage of the expression ‘*api*’ indicates the secondary nature of other actions. Thus, he practices *bhakti* mixed with *karma* rather than *karma* mixed with *bhakti* (atrāśrayate samyag sevata iti āḍ-upasargena sevāyāḥ pradhānībhūtatvam | karmāṇy apīty api-śabdenāpakarṣa-bodhakena karmaṇām guṇībhūtatvam | ato yaṃ karma-miśra-bhaktimān, na tu bhakti-miśra-karmavān)

²⁵ kim aham ananya-bhakto bhavāmi, kiṃ vānantarokta-lakṣaṇaḥ sakāma-bhakta eva

²⁶ tatra sarva-prakṛṣṭo ‘ananya-bhakto bhavitum na prabhaviṣyasi | nāpi sarva-bhakteṣv apakṛṣṭaḥ sakāma-bhakto bhava | kintu tvaṃ madhyama-bhakto bhavety āha cetaseti | sarva-karmāṇi svāśrama-dharmān vyavahārika-karmāṇi ca mayi sannasya samarpya,

the ultimate aspiration, *ananya-bhakti*. Having defined the *karma-miśra-bhakta*, I will return to comments from Viśvanātha on BG 9.27 to further comprehend the category of *kevala-bhakti* or *ananya-bhakti*. Viśvanātha is keen to distinguish this type of *bhakti* from any other type of practice as follows:

However, the *bhaktas*, offer to their favorite deity, the Lord, all the actions of their self, mind, life airs and senses. This section on *bhakti* states: ‘In harmony with one’s own nature whatever one does with body, words, mind, senses, intelligence or self, one should offer that to Supreme Nārāyaṇa (BP 11.2.36).’²⁷ [Opponent]: However, when you offer in sacrifice, that (sacrifice) is a limb of *bhakti* which is worship, whose objective is Viṣṇu only. And you perform penances, although penances are of the form of vows such as *Ekādaśī* fast and so on... Therefore, this is undeviating *bhakti* (*ananyā-bhakti*). How can you state that it is not? [Response:] True, although undeviating *bhakti* is not performing an action and then offering it to the Lord. Instead, it is known that (*ananya-bhakti* entails) only offering it to the Lord. As declared by Śrī Prahlāda (BP 7.5.23) ‘Hearing, chanting, remembering Viṣṇu...’ Here it is also said (BP 7.5.24) ‘If performing these nine processes they should be offered by a person to Viṣṇu...’. And on this statement the revered Śrīdhara Svāmī explains ‘*bhakti* is performed unto the Supreme Viṣṇu and *bhakti* is only offered. Instead of performing action then offering it later’. Therefore, because of this [Śrīdhara Svāmī comments] this verse (BG 9.27) will not result in pure [*bhakti*].²⁸

²⁷ bhaktais tu svātma-manah-prāṇendriya-vyāpāra-mātram eva sveṣṭa-deve bhagavaty arpyate, yad uktam bhakti-prakaraṇa eva kāyena vācā manasendriyair vā buddhyātmanā vānusṛta-svabhāvāt karoti yad yat sakalaṁ parasmai nārāyaṇāyetyeti samarpayet tat

²⁸ nanu ca juhoṣīti havanam idam arcana-bhakty-aṅga-bhūtam viṣṇūddeśayakam eva, tapasyasīti, tapo 'py etad ekādaśy-ādi-vrata-rūpam eva, ata iyam ananyaiva bhaktih kim iti nocyate satyam ananyā bhaktir hi kṛtvāpi na bhagavaty arpyate kintu bhagavaty arpitaiva jñāyate, yad uktam śrī-prahlādena śravaṇam kṛtanam viṣṇau smaraṇam ity atra iti pumsārpitā viṣṇau bhaktiś cen nava-lakṣaṇā kriyeta ity asya vyākhyā ca śrī-svāmi-caraṇānām bhagavati viṣṇau bhaktiḥ kriyate sā cārpitaiva satī yadi kriyeta na tu kṛtā satī paścād arpyate ity ataḥ padyam idam na kevalāyām paryavased iti

This passage illustrates that *kevala-* or *ananya-bhakti* is offering everything and not acting separately and then offering it to the Lord. Therefore, verse BG 9.27 is not included in the category of *ananya-bhakti* as it entails acting first then offering that to the Supreme, however nor is it included in *niskāma-karma*, because all acts are offered, not just prescribed *karmas* delineated in the Vedas. Verse 9.27 exemplifies the practice of the *karma-miśra-bhakta*, a mixture of *karma* and *bhakti* with *bhakti* being the primary ingredient. Viśvanātha is keen to clarify the distinctions between various types of *karma* and *bhakti*,²⁹ enabling a *bhakti* practitioner to conscientiously progress to the highest platform steadily, thus empowering one to adopt a practice appropriate to their standing, whilst being conscious and mindful of the ultimate aspiration. Thus, for an individual not qualified for *ananya-bhakti*, Viśvanātha emphatically states that one should adopt *karma-miśra-bhakta* as an intermediary.

It is also worth noting that Viśvanātha's comments on BG 7.16 introduce us to another category which is insightful in the context of our discussion. Viśvanātha explains that BG 7.16 describes four types of *bhaktas*, each of whom are eligible for *pradhānī-bhūta-bhakti*, three of these are known as *karma-miśra-bhaktas* and the fourth type is a *jñāna-miśra-bhakta*.³⁰ He proceeds to describe another type of *bhakti* known as *guṇī-bhūta-bhakti*, which is observed in the *karmīs*, *jñānīs* and *yogīs*, who desire the fruits of their actions and so on. However, due to the absence of the dominance of *bhakti* element in them, this *guṇī-bhūta-bhakti* is not categorized as *bhakti*, due to being mainly *karma* and so on respectively. Things are named according to predominance, therefore in this case named as *karma*, *jñāna* and *yoga*.³¹ This category of practice, *guṇī-bhūta-bhakti*, is not encouraged by Viśvanātha even though a mixture of *bhakti* and *karma* as *bhakti* is not the dominant element in this combination and thus contrasts the *karma-*

²⁹ He also outlines different types of *bhakti* and *karma* practices in the very introduction to his *Gītā* commentary, he states *bhakti* is of two types, *kevalā* (pure) and *pradhānī-bhūtā-bhakti* (*bhakti* mixed with *karma* or *jñāna*). Among them, the first (i.e. *kevalā-bhakti*) is supremely powerful by nature and even without *karma* and *jñāna* it is pure and potent. (*bhaktis tu dvidhā kevalā pradhānī bhūtā ca | tatrādyā svata eva parama-prabalā | te dve karma-jñāne vinaiva viśuddha-prabhāvatī akiñcanā ananyādi-śabda-vācyā*)

³⁰ *ty ete pradhānībhūta-bhakty-adhikāriṇaś catvāro nirūpitāḥ | tatrādimeṣu triṣu karma-miśrā bhaktiḥ | antime caturthe jñāna-miśrā*

³¹ *yā tu ṛtīyā guṇībhūtā bhaktiḥ karminī jñānini yogini ca karmādi-phala-siddhy-arthā dṛśyate | tasyāḥ prādhānyābhāvāt na bhaktitva-vyapadeśaḥ | kintu tatra tatra karmādīnām eva prādhānyāt | prādhānyena vyapadeśā bhavanti iti nyāyena karmatva-jñānatva-yogatva-vyapadeśaḥ*

miśra-bhakti described, which is also a mixture of *bhakti* and *karma*, however with *bhakti* as the primary element.

Who is qualified to abandon *karma-miśra-bhakti*?

In this final section I will examine Viśvanātha's comments to BG 18.66 in which he delineates the factor that qualifies one to abandon *karma* completely even *karma-miśra-bhakti*, enabling one to solely and fully embrace *bhakti*. In BG 18.66 Kṛṣṇa concludes, 'Abandoning all *dharmas*, just surrender to me alone. I will liberate you from all sin. Do not worry'³². Viśvanātha's comments as follows:

Indeed earlier, (I stated) that you're not qualified for the best of all, undeviating *bhakti* (*ananya-bhakti*) of me [in BG 18.57]. Previously I said that you have the qualification to perform *karma-miśra-bhakti* as stated [in BG 9.27] 'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, and so on.' Now, however, out of extraordinary mercy I bestow you the qualification indeed for pure *bhakti*. [I give you this qualification for pure *bhakti*] after rejecting the rule that such pure *bhakti* is obtained only through the mercy of one-pointed devotee of mine if one is lucky. Even though I created this rule, I reject it like I gave up my promise in the fight with Bhisma. This is the idea. And by following my order in abandoning regular (*nitya*) and occasional (*naimittika*) acts, you should not suspect possible detriment. The command to execute regular (*nitya*) acts by me is presented in the Vedas. However now, I am presenting the command for you to abandon them. Therefore, how can sin be possible, in not executing regular (*nitya*) acts? On the contrary, therefore, in executing the regular (*nitya*) acts, you will certainly incur sin, due to violating my direct order.³³

³² sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ

³³ purvam hi mad-ananya-bhaktau sarva-śreṣṭhāyām tavādhikāro nāstīty atas tvam yat karoṣi yad aśnāsītyādi-bruvāṇena mayā karma-miśrāyām bhaktau tavādhikāra uktah, samprati tv atikṛpayā tubhyam ananya-bhaktau evādhikāras tasyā ananya-bhakter yādṛcchika-mad-aikāntika-bhaktakṛpaika-labhyatva-lakṣaṇam niyamam sva-kṛtam api bhīṣma-yuddhe sva-pratijñam ivāpanīya datta iti bhavāḥ, na ca mad-ājñayā nitya-naimittika-karma-tyāge tava pratyavāya-śaṅkā

As discussed, Viśvanātha's standpoint proposes that *karma-miśra-bhakti* can be abandoned only when one attains grace from advanced *bhaktas*, in the exceptional case of Arjuna however, Kṛṣṇa himself bestows this grace. Kṛṣṇa granting such mercy himself is rare and Viśvanātha shares an example to aid our understanding. Although Kṛṣṇa had taken a vow not to take up weapons at Kurukṣetra, nevertheless to protect his dear devotee, Arjuna, from the imminent assault from Bhīma, Kṛṣṇa was willing to break his vow. In the same way, in this instance, Kṛṣṇa breaks convention. I am tempted to claim that the grace referred to by Viśvanātha, which is bestowed, is synonymous with attaining the firm faith mentioned by the former teachers of the tradition as outlined in works like the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and *Karma-vivṛti* earlier. Thus, it is grace embodying firm or mature faith which is required to relinquish the jurisdiction of *karma* and adopt the superior process of *bhakti* solely. He emphasizes that this shift can only be achieved through the mercy of those who are one-pointed or completely engrossed on the path of *bhakti* or exceptionally through the direct grace of the Supreme.

Another important consideration to recollect from chapter three of this thesis concern Viśvanātha's comments to BG 7.28 in which he vividly describes the relationship between *karma* and *bhakti*. He states that by the execution of *karma*, there is an increase in *sattva* or goodness and a decrease in *tama* or ignorance. Therefore, although *karma* is not considered to be the direct cause of *bhakti*, nevertheless, he illustrates how *karma* is conducive for progress on the path of *bhakti*. *Karma* practice establishes a *sattvic* disposition, thus inviting the attention of the *madhyama bhaktas*, which results in the gift of *bhakti*. In other words, though Viśvanātha maintains *bhakti's* self-manifest nature, he commends *karma* for bringing an individual to the *sattva* plane which tempts *bhakti* to manifest via the *bhaktas*. So according to Viśvanātha, one pursuing *bhakti* should generally engage in the practice of *karma-miśra-bhakti* initially, which is outlined in verses such as BG 9.27. This intermediate stage necessitates that all activities should be offered to the Lord, contrasting *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*. This practice will provide stability encouraging a *sattvic* temperament thus attracting the grace of the pure *bhaktas*, enabling one to dismiss *karma* completely and adopt *ananya-bhakti* qualified by firm faith in *bhakti*.

sambhavet, veda-rūpeṇa mayaiva nitya-karmānuṣṭhānam ādiṣṭam adhunā tu svarūpeṇaiva tat-tyāga ādiśyate ity atah katham te nitya-karmākaraṇe pāpāni sambhavanti pratyuta atah param nitya-karmaṇi kṛta eva pāpāni bhaviṣyanti sāksān mad-ajñā-langhanād ity avadheyam

I have summarized Viśvanātha’s view on *karma-bhakti* relations in the table below:

Mode of Practice	Characteristics
<i>Sakāma-karma-yoga/ guṇī-bhūta-bhakti</i>	Performs <i>karmas</i> for personal gains. <i>Karma</i> gains its efficacy by being connected to <i>bhakti</i> <i>Karma</i> dominant element in mixture, thus known as ‘ <i>karma</i> ’
<i>Niṣkāma-karma-yoga</i>	Only offer <i>karmas</i> based on prescribed duties from the Vedas
<i>Karma-miśra-bhakti</i> (or <i>Karma-miśra-pradhānī-bhūtā-bhakti</i>)	Offers all actions not just <i>karmas</i> based on prescribed duties from the Vedas – BG 9.27
<i>Kevala-/Ananya-bhakti</i>	Eligible to abandon <i>karma</i> and only acts for the pleasure of the Lord. (However, difficult to attain, only possible by achieving grace from the pure <i>bhaktas</i> or the Lord directly.) – BG 18.66

It is evident that in his *Gītā* commentary Viśvanātha generally encourages the practice of *karma* in close conjunction with the development of *bhakti*. So much so that the type of *karma* encouraged is that infused with the spirit of *bhakti* from the very beginning of practice. His comparison of *niṣkāma-karma* and *karma-miśra-bhakti* in his commentary to BG 9.27 particularly highlights his innovation in the practice of *karma* for a *bhakta*. His recommendation of how *karma* should be executed and offered has strong overtones of *bhakti*. We can also infer that Viśvanātha’s accommodation of *karma* according to the *Gītā* is more in line with the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*’s and *Karma-vivṛti*’s outlook on the relationship between *karma* and *bhakti*, nevertheless his discordant statements in his *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* commentary such as BP 1.5.17 are demonstrated by BG 3.26, suggesting that even according to his *Gītā* commentary that *bhakti* being independently powerful can theoretically be adopted solely from the offset. However, Viśvanātha’s sustained emphasis on *karma-miśra-bhakti* in the *Gītā* indicates that the general route for a novice *bhakta* entails the practice of *karma* as an intermediary initially. This indicates that his accommodation of *karma* is more pronounced in his *Gītā* commentary than his earlier *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* commentary. Therefore, although Viśvanātha’s position remains

essentially the same on vital matters as his *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* commentary, his *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-ṭīkā* appears to promote the accommodation of the practice of *karma* far more.³⁴ The reasons for Viśvanātha's shift in emphasis are unclear. Perhaps the broader scope of the *Gītā* in the matter of alternative spiritual practices compared to more esoteric and *bhakti*-centric texts like the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* made it unavoidable for Viśvanātha to convey such messages in his *Gītā* commentary. Furthermore, he may have been responding to the evolving societal trajectories and concerns, or simply addressing an alternate audience compared to his previous exegeses.

³⁴ Another example of Viśvanātha's usage of the *Gītā* to promote the execution of *karma* or social duties can be found in his commentary to verse 3.35, which declares it is better to perform one's own *dharma*, even if deficient, in preference to [performing] another's *dharma* well. Destruction in one's own *dharma* is better, performing another's *dharma* brings fear (śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt svadharme nidhanaṃ śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ). Viśvanātha provides a noteworthy commentary to this verse, explaining that it is referring to Arjuna's appeal to do something less violent than the *dharma* of a warrior. Viśvanātha states: 'Although there may be deficiency (of one's own duty) i.e. some specific fault, even though one is not able to perform it properly. This is better than performing others *dharma* correctly even though performed well, and even though full of good qualities. The reason given is destruction in one's own *dharma* is better, performing others *dharma* brings danger' (viguṇaḥ kiṃcit doṣa-viśiṣṭo 'pi samyag anuṣṭhātum aśakyo 'api paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt sādhu eva anuṣṭhātum śakyād api sarva-guṇa-pūrṇād api sakāśāt śreyān tatra hetuḥ svadharmā ity ādi). Consequently, this verse and Viśvanātha's comments suggest that such duty must be performed despite the apparent fault of violence. Based on Viśvanātha's statement, we can extrapolate an explicit admission that violence is permissible. This would be important for a *kṣatriya* king like Jaisingh who was engaged in violence for a 'greater good'. It also suggests that prescribed *karmas* are important and should not be whimsically neglected or replaced by another's duty. Adherence to one's designated duty will yield benefit for the performer whereas avoidance of one's duty and the unauthorized acceptance of another's duty would invite both personal and social disruption. This stance emphasizes the importance of committing to one's social position and responsibilities. It therefore provides encouragement to those engaged in political affairs. Indeed, Viśvanātha makes similar statements in relation to a *kṣatriya*'s duty in particular. In his commentary to BG 1.36, Viśvanātha quotes the *Manu-smṛti* 8.350, stating without hesitation, when killing the murderer, no fault whatsoever is incurred for the killer. Similarly, in commenting on BG 2.26, Viśvanātha quotes the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.54.40: The *dharma* for warriors established by the original progenitor, Lord Brahmā, states that one may have to kill even his own brother. Therefore, this is the most terrible *dharma*. However, it must also be highlighted that many of the quotes favoring the practice of *karma* appear in the 'karma-yoga' section of the *Gītā*, the first six chapters, where Kṛṣṇa is especially endorsing the practice of *karma* to Arjuna.

The intended readership for each of the texts may have differed, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* commentary perhaps prescribed for the renunciate community in Vṛṇḍavana he was accustomed too, whereas his *Gītā* commentary was perhaps destined for a wider audience spanning to Jaipur. Whatever the actual case, there is a consistency across his writings, for instance, *bhakti's* causeless nature, *karma's* dependence on *bhakti* for effectiveness, *bhakti's* independent powerful status and the ultimate requirement to abandon *karma* are observed throughout both commentaries.

Relationship between *karma* and *bhakti* according to Baladeva

Having examined Viśvanātha's commentary on the *Gītā*, I will now turn to his student Baladeva's *Gītā-bhūṣaṇa*, the other major contribution on the *Gītā* from the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition in this period. I will examine his perspective on *karma-bhakti* relations, and compare it to his teacher Viśvanātha's *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* and the works of *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and the *Karma-vivṛti*.

Three types of *bhakti* practitioners

In the opening to his commentary on the *Gītā*, Baladeva introduces us to a unique classification of *bhaktas* which encapsulates his outlook on *karma-bhakti* relations. The system fashioned illustrates the role of *karma* and *varṇāśrama* in consideration of *bhakti* practice, thus likely to have been configured as a response to the political concerns regarding public engagement at the time. In the introduction of the *Gītā-bhūṣaṇa* he describes who is qualified to accept the *Gītā* as follows:

One is considered qualified when he has faith in scripture, is fixed in *dharma* and has conquered the senses. There are three types of such persons known as the *saniṣṭha*, *pariniṣṭhita* and the *nirapekṣa*. Among them, the first is known as the *saniṣṭha*, one who acts according to his own *dharma* [based on *varṇāśrama*] as worship to Hari, although fixed with the desire to see the heavens. The second known as the *pariniṣṭhita* engages in *bhakti* to Hari and acts for the sake of benefiting the people of the world. These two types follow their particular *āśramas*. The third type called the *nirapekṣa*, who are without any

āśrama, only engage in worshipping Hari because of a pure heart, purified by prayers, austerities, truthfulness, and so on.³⁵

In this description, Baladeva outlines three types of *bhakti* practitioners. Two of the practitioners are obliged to execute *karma* or prescribed duties pertaining to *varṇāśrama*, namely the *saniṣṭha* and *pariniṣṭhita*. However, their motivations to perform *varṇāśrama* acts differ, the *saniṣṭha* performs such *karmas* to attain heavenly realms, whereas the *pariniṣṭhita* executes *karmas* to primarily educate others, whilst simultaneously executing *bhakti*. This distinction in motivation is reiterated in Baladeva's comments on BG 18.66 in which he states a *saniṣṭha* should execute *dharma* for purification of the heart and the *pariniṣṭhita* should execute *dharmas* for the sake of benefiting the people of the world.³⁶ Therefore although the *pariniṣṭhita* does not have any obligation to execute *karma* for the purpose of purification yet still engages in *karma* to establish standards of ideal conduct. It is probably that this typology by Baladeva was a theological response to the pressure of conforming to the prescribed modes of public conduct curated by Jaisingh, especially considering that similar terminology is adopted in the *Karma-vivṛti* and *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* such as the category of the *nirapekṣa* in reference to Jīva Gosvāmī's writings.

Further perspectives are offered regarding the three categories of practitioners in Baladeva's *Brahma-sūtra* commentary, specifically his comments upon 3.4.1 and 3.4.32-39 which I will refer to as required. Indeed, in the *Brahma-sūtra* 3.4.1, Baladeva's comments provide a summary similar to that described in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* introduction concerning the three types of practitioners.³⁷ Therefore, this innovation from Baladeva of various *bhaktas* is not confined to

³⁵ asya śāstrasya śraddhāluḥ sad-dharma-niṣṭho vijitendriyo 'dhikārī | sa ca sa-niṣṭha-pariniṣṭhita-nirapekṣa-bhedāt trividhaḥ | teṣu svargādi-lokān api didṛkṣr niṣṭhayā sva-dharmān hary-arcana-rūpān ācaran prathamah | loka-sañjighṛkṣayā tān ācaran hari-bhakti-nirato dvitīyah | sa ca sa ca sāśramah | satya-tapo-japādibhir viśuddha-citto hary-eka-niratas tṛtīyo nirāśramah

³⁶ saniṣṭhānām hṛd-viśuddhaye pariniṣṭhitanām ca loka-saṅgrahāya yathāyatham kāryās te dharmah

³⁷ Some people are known as *saniṣṭha*, those who perform their duties pertaining to the *dharma* of *varṇa* and *āśrama*, desiring to see the heavenly world. However, some people act (in the same way) merely for the sake of setting a proper example to the world, they are known as *pariniṣṭhita*. And both these classifications belong within *āśramas*. The *nirapekṣa* is purified by the *dharma* of *japa*, penance, truth and so on in earlier lives, in this respect, they are outside *āśramas*. Thus, three kinds of pursuers of knowledge are clearly outlined. (kecit loka-vaicitrī-didṛkṣavo varṇāśrama-dharmān pariniṣṭhayācarantaḥ saniṣṭhā ucyante | kecit tu loka-sañjighṛkṣayaiva tān

the *Gītā* and is found in his other literary contributions, and consequently can be considered a critical feature of his teachings.

Svaniṣṭha bhakta

The first type of *bhakta* according to Baladeva's classification, the *svaniṣṭha bhakta*³⁸ is described in detail in the *Brahma-sūtra* 3.4.32-33. In Baladeva's comments on 3.4.32 he states the following:

A doubt is presented that if the *svaniṣṭha* has obtained knowledge, then must he still perform *karmas* prescribed by *varṇāśrama* or not? Since the result of such *karmas* culminates in this knowledge, having gained this result, surely practices are halted as it is seen one no longer requires to practice *karma*.³⁹

In response to this doubt in *sūtra* 3.4.32 it is stated:

That *karmas* derived from *āśramas* must also be performed as they have been prescribed, Baladeva explains that *karma* is mandatory, and not only *karmas* in relation to one's *āśrama*, but also, *karmas* in relation to one's *varṇa*. Why? Because such acts lead to more knowledge.⁴⁰

In other words, *karma* is not to ever be abandoned for the *svaniṣṭha bhakta* as it accrues knowledge, which is the goal, and, more knowledge is not disadvantageous. Therefore, according to Baladeva, *karma* is supportive of knowledge and thus not detrimental as a practice even once one attains this knowledge. This passage by Baladeva presents quite an endorsement for the practice of *karma*, suggesting that even after gaining knowledge of Brahman, attaining effectively a self-realized or liberated state that one should still continue to engage in *varṇāśrama*. This

ācarantaḥ pariniṣṭhitāḥ | te caite cobhaye sāśramāḥ | pare tu prāg-bhavīyair dharmaiḥ satya-tapo-
japādibhiś ca viśuddhā nirapekṣāḥ | tatra te nirāśramāḥ | ity evam traividhyam vyaktam bhāvi)

³⁸ In this *Brahma-sūtra* passage, the term *svaniṣṭha* is used in place of *saniṣṭha*, the terms seem to be merely synonyms.

³⁹ samśayaḥ | labdha-vidyena sva-niṣṭhena karmāṇi kāryāṇi na veti | vidyā-lakṣaṇasya tat-phalasya prāptatvāt phala-prāptau sādhana-nivṛtter drṣṭatvāt na kāryāṇīti prāpte

⁴⁰ vihitatvāc cāśrama karmāpi | apir varṇa-karma-samuccayārthaḥ tena sva-varṇāśrama-karmāṇi kāryāṇi | kutaḥ? vidyopacitaye

position is resonant of the stance promoted by Kṛṣṇadeva⁴¹ that we have earlier analyzed, who proposes that one continues engaging in *karma* practice even after reaching the highest levels of *bhakti* i.e. *rāgānuga-bhakti*. Nevertheless, though the practice of *karma* is encouraged even beyond its achieved goal, one should not infer from these statements that *karma* is the cause of liberation in this case. This is clarified in *sūtra* 3.4.33 in which Baladeva explains that the *svaiṣṭha bhakta* continues to execute *karma* even after knowledge emerges, not because *karmas* are the causes of liberation but because they are cooperative towards knowledge.⁴² This stance also resembles the positions presented by Viśvanātha and Kṛṣṇadeva on the cause of *bhakti* who explain that *karma* is not the cause of *bhakti* yet it's practice is favorable for the sprouting of *bhakti*.

Baladeva provides further insight into the characteristics of such a *svaiṣṭha bhakta* in his comments on *sūtra* 3.4.33 wherein he claims:

The practice of *karma* is not that of *kāmya-karmas*, due to the result experienced, such acts are not motivated by selfish desires. The *svaiṣṭha*, who is full of knowledge, pursues *karma* to achieve Brahman and secondarily to attain higher realms and so on.⁴³

Baladeva describes that the *svaiṣṭha bhakta's* visit to the heavens is auxiliary, and he compares it to one who is visiting a village on his way to his ultimate destination who may touch the grass casually on route.⁴⁴ Therefore in the *Brahma-sūtra* verses 3.4.32-33, Baladeva proposes that the *svaiṣṭha bhakta* should continue to engage in *varṇāśrama* even after attaining perfection or Brahman, he also emphasizes that such a person is distinct from one executing *karma* for sensual pursuits, and rather his motivation to execute *karma* is not primarily to attain the heavens but to attain Brahman.

⁴¹ Kiyokazu Okita, "Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism on Trial: Continuity and Transformation in the Eighteenth Century", in Ravi Gupta (ed.) *Introduction to Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Philosophy*, (Aldershot, 2014), p.109

⁴² vidyā-sahakāritvenaiva tena karmāṇi kāryāṇi, na tu mukti-hetutvena

⁴³ na ca teṣām tad-anubhava-phalakatvāt kāmyatvam, tena tat-kāmanayānanuṣṭhānāt | svaiṣṭho vidvān brahma prāpnuvann anusangāt svargādikam anubhavati |

⁴⁴ grāmam gacchams tṛṇam sprśatīti atra tṛṇa-sparśavat

Pariniṣṭha Bhakta

Having examined the *svaniṣṭha bhakta*, I will elaborate on Baladeva's second category of *bhaktas* the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta*.⁴⁵ In BG 9.27 the following is stated by Baladeva regarding the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta*:

However, you as a *pariniṣṭhita* should execute *bhakti* in the form of chanting and so on, [and] for the sake of benefitting the people of the world offer all *karmas* [to me], this is also performing *bhakti* to me.⁴⁶

In the case of the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta*, Baladeva recommends that all *karmas* should be offered to the Supreme as well as performing *bhāgavata-dharma* such as chanting the glories of the Supreme. He lists various activities that one can offer to the Supreme, delineating a wide-range of activities both Vedic and worldly, for instance, acts that are useful to sustain the body, Vedic sacrifices executed such as oblations for the *agnihotra* and whatever food, gold and so on, that are given away to saints, the yearly *cāndrāyaṇa* and so on.⁴⁷ Baladeva then proceeds to declare the following:

and this form of offering all actions is not to be considered the same as the *bhakti* of the *saniṣṭhas*. Due to the offering in this regard [of] only Vedic actions by the *saniṣṭhas*. However, only the *pariniṣṭhitas* is [described] here, due to offering all actions as commanded by the master in (BG 9.27) 'whatever you do...'.⁴⁸

This description of the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* mirrors Viśvanātha's notion of the *karma-miśra-bhakta* described in his comments on BG 9.27 discussed earlier. The *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* is distinguished

⁴⁵ The terms *pariniṣṭha* and *pariniṣṭhita* also appear to be merely synonyms.

⁴⁶ tvayā tu pariniṣṭhitena kīrtanādikāṃ bhaktiṃ kurvatāpi loka-saṅgrahāya nikhila-karmārpaṇān mamāpi bhaktiḥ kāryeti bhāvenāḥ yad iti

⁴⁷ yat tvam deha-yātrā-sādhakam laukikam karma karoṣi, yac ca deha-dhārṇārtham annādikam aśnāsi, tathā yaj juhoṣi vaidikam agnihotrādi-homam anutiṣṭhasi, yac ca sat-pātrebhyo 'nna-hiraṇyādikam dadāsi, pratyabdam ajñāta-durita-kṣataye cāndrāyaṇādy ācarasi, tat sarvaṃ mad-arpaṇam yathā syāt tathā kuruṣva

⁴⁸ na ceyam sarva-karmārpaṇa-rūpā bhaktiḥ sa-niṣṭhānām iti vācyam, tair vaidikānām eva tatrārpyamāṇāt | kintu pariniṣṭhitānām eveyam | tair yat karoṣi ity ādi svāmi-nirdeśena sarva-karmaṇām tatrārpaṇāt |

from the *saniṣṭha* as he offers all acts just as the *karma-miśra-bhakta* and not just Vedic actions. His motivation is to benefit others by becoming the ideal example of public conduct for the wider society, acting in this way is also equivalent to executing *bhakti* a significant endorsement for performing *karma* according to Baladeva's comments.

So far it has been described that the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* has two primary responsibilities, firstly, executing *bhāgavata-dharma* and secondly executing *varṇāśrama-dharma* for the sake of benefiting others, thus a natural question arises, what is the extent of one's responsibilities to each of these activities? A definitive response to this question, is presented in Baladeva's comments in the final chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, in 18.56-57. In these verses Baladeva explains that a person who takes shelter of Kṛṣṇa as his primary concern yet still executes prescribed *karmas* incidentally is a *pariniṣṭhita bhakta*.⁴⁹ In other words, Baladeva's asserts that the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* in all cases performs service to the Lord or *bhāgavata-dharma* as his primary duty, and *karma* only if possible. It is evident from this passage that he advocates the practice of *bhāgavata-dharma* over the execution of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Further details in this regard are also provided in Baladeva's examination of the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* in *Brahma-sūtras* 3.4.34-35. It is similarly proposed here that a *pariniṣṭhita* has two core duties:

Firstly, he performs *karma* according to the *dharma* of *varṇāśrama* for the sake of benefiting the people of the world, and concurrently performs *dharma* in relation to the Lord such as hearing of his narrations, and so on, out of love.⁵⁰

However, in Sūtra 3.4.34, a doubt is presented:

For a *pariniṣṭhita*, is it possible to perform both acts simultaneously, or must he perform them sequentially? The *pūrvapakṣa* argues that the simultaneous execution of *varṇāśrama-dharma* and *bhāgavata-*

⁴⁹ atha pariniṣṭhitānām āha sarveti sārḍha-dvayābhyām | mad-vyapāśrayo madekāntī sarvāṇi
sva-vihitāni karmāṇi yathā-yogam kurvāṇaḥ | api-śabdād gauṇa-kāle mad-ekāntinas tasya
mukhya-kālābhāvāt

⁵⁰ atra pariniṣṭhitasya lokārtham varṇāśrama-dharmāḥ kartavyatayā prāptāḥ prīty-artham
śravaṇādayo bhagavad-dharmāś ca

dharma cannot be done and as the neglect of prescribed *karmas* is faulty there is no certain directive.⁵¹

The doubt presented concludes in the proposition that there seems to be no priority between *varṇāśrama-dharma* and *bhāgavata-dharma* practices, and therefore if a conflict arises between them, either can be performed by the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta*. However, Baladeva protests and proceeds to stress that in all circumstances the *pariniṣṭhita* should always execute the activities pertaining to *bhāgavata-dharma*. Baladeva responding to the *pūrvapakṣa's* claim, explains:

Not in every circumstance is one obliged to perform one's own *dharma* according to *varṇāśrama*. However, *bhāgavata-dharma* is certainly to be done by the *pariniṣṭhita* and one's own *varṇāśrama-dharma* may be performed if somehow one has time.⁵²

Baladeva states that both the *śruti* and *smṛti* texts also verify this viewpoint.⁵³ Thus, Baladeva stresses that *bhāgavata-dharma* must always be executed whereas the execution of *varṇāśrama* is optionally performed. This contrasts the position of the *svaniṣṭha bhakta* who is obliged to perform *varṇāśrama-dharma* even after attaining perfection, whereas the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* performs *varṇāśrama-dharma* acts as long it does not impede the execution of *bhāgavata-dharma* activities. Commenting on the following *sūtra* 3.4.35, Baladeva reassures the *pariniṣṭhita* practitioner that no sin is incurred by not executing the *varṇāśrama karmas* due to the practice of *bhāgavata-dharma*. Baladeva claims that the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* is not overcome by faults born from not executing *karmas* according to one's own *āśrama*, due to the obligation of hearing narrations of the Lord and so on.⁵⁴ Thus, it is established in this section that even though a *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* is encouraged to perform *varṇāśrama* acts alongside *bhāgavata-dharma*, it is

⁵¹ teṣāṃ ubhayeṣāṃ yugapat-prāptau kim te krameṇānuṣṭheyāḥ kim vādyān vihāyottare te iti sandehe yugapat-anuṣṭhāna-sambhavāt vihitānām tyāge doṣāc cānirṇayena bhāvyaṃ iti prāpte

⁵² apir avadhāraṇe | sarvathaiva sva-dharmānurodham akṛtvavivarty arthaḥ | pariniṣṭhitena tena bhagavad-dharmā evānuṣṭheyā | sva-dharmās tu kathaṅcit gaṇa-kāle |

⁵³ He quotes *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 2.2.5 which states that according to the *śruti* texts, the highest duty of man is to know God beyond the execution of *karmic* rituals. The *smṛti* texts also echo the same, he quotes the *Bhagavad-Gītā* 9.12-13, in which the *bhāgavata-dharma* activities of great souls are described.

⁵⁴ śravaṇādy-anurodhena svāśrama-dharmākaraṇe taj-janyair doṣaiḥ pariniṣṭhitasyānabhibhavam darśayati

also stressed that the execution of *bhāgavata-dharma* is more significant than the performance of *varṇāśrama karmas* according to Baladeva's readings.

It is also worth noting that in this section of the *Brahma-sūtras*, the *pūrvapakṣa* to refute Baladeva's stance offers a verse from the *Viṣṇu Puraṇa* that indicates that the performance of *varṇāśrama-dharma* acts are considered essential to pleasing Viṣṇu. The *pūrvapakṣa* shares *Viṣṇu Puraṇa* 3.8.9 which states: 'Viṣṇu, the supreme person, is worshipped by a person whose conduct is in accordance with *varṇāśrama*. There is no other path to satisfy him.'⁵⁵ The *pūrvapakṣa* claims that this verse serves as evidence that *varṇāśrama-dharma* acts must always be executed. However, Baladeva offers an alternative interpretation or a corrective reading of this verse, a perspective which suggests that this verse intends to rather demonstrate that an individual who participates in *varṇāśrama* should also worship Viṣṇu because this is what actually satisfies Viṣṇu. He contends that the emphasis in this verse is on the expression 'ārādhyate' or 'worship', rather than the execution of *varṇāśrama*.⁵⁶ In this way, Baladeva rationalizes his stance claiming even in this verse *bhāgavata-dharma* is portrayed as superior to *varṇāśrama-dharma*, further reinforcing his position. To supplement his reading of this verse, Baladeva also quotes an earlier passage in the *Viṣṇu Puraṇa* 2.13.9-11, where the case of king Bharata is depicted. This example illustrates a king who due to being absorbed in the worship of the Supreme neglected the performance of *karmas*. Nevertheless, despite the negligence the king's engagement in *bhāgavata-dharma* protected him from incurring sin. Therefore, Baladeva argues that the later verse in *Viṣṇu Puraṇa* 3.8.9 should be understood in light of the earlier verses described in the *Viṣṇu Puraṇa* such as the chronicle of king Bharata. Thus, Baladeva demonstrates to the reader that although the *pariṇiṣṭhita bhakta* performs *varṇāśrama-dharma* acts to educate others, whilst simultaneously performing *bhāgavata-dharma* activities, if for whatever reason a conflict arises between these two *dharmas*, then *bhāgavata-dharma* activities should prevail and one can be rest assured that no sin is incurred due to the relinquishment of *varṇāśrama-dharma* acts.

⁵⁵ tatra varṇāśramācāravatā puruṣeṇa paraḥ pumān viṣṇur ārādhyate pañthā nānyat tat-toṣa-kāraṇam iti parāśaroktyā (We also saw this verse referred to in the karmādhikāra-nirṇayaḥ.)

⁵⁶ varṇāśramācāreti śrī-viṣṇu-purāṇa-vākye tu tādrśena yat tad-ārādhanam tad eva tat-toṣa-karam ity eva mantavyam, na tu karmaiva tad-ārādhanam iti

Nirapekṣa Bhakta

Having outlined the responsibilities and the obligations of the *svaniṣṭha* and *pariniṣṭhita bhaktas*, Baladeva proceeds to describe the final type of *bhakta*, the *nirapekṣa*. In Baladeva's comments upon BG 9.27 he briefly refers to the *nirapekṣa* as follows: 'By verses such as BG 9.14 'satatam...' the *bhakti* of the *nirapekṣas* is described by me to you'.⁵⁷ The implication here is that the *nirapekṣas* do not partake in *varṇāśrama-dharma* acts, and only perform *bhāgavata-dharma* activities such as chanting the names of the lord, offering respects to the Supreme, and so on as delineated in BG 9.14.⁵⁸ Hence, they are completely engrossed and engaged in *bhāgavata-dharma* acts continuously, and do not participate in *karmas* pertaining to *varṇāśrama-dharma* at all.⁵⁹

Baladeva also illustrates the *nirapekṣa bhakta* further in *sūtras* 3.4.36-8. In these passages, Baladeva responds to the proposition that those who have no *āśrama* cannot have knowledge as it is well known that *āśrama-dharma* is the cause of knowledge.⁶⁰ To counter this view, Baladeva refers to the case of a great female sage known as Gārgī Vāchaknavī in his comments to *sūtra* 3.4.36,⁶¹ as follows:

Those who do not belong to an *āśrama*, who have an inherent dispassion present, having attained impressions from previous lives, and who are purified by performing *dharmas* such as *japa*, austerities, truth and so on, knowledge arises, even though they haven't executed *karmas* in this present life. This is seen in examples like Gārgī, who was a knower of Brahman.⁶²

⁵⁷ satatam ity ādibhir nirapekṣāṇām bhaktir mayā tvām praty uktā

⁵⁸ Always chanting and endeavoring with firm vows, offering respects to me, they continually engage in worship with devotion. (satatam kīrtayanto mām yatantaś ca dṛḍha-vratāḥ | namasyantaś ca mām bhaktyā nitya-yuktā upāsate)

⁵⁹ The *nirapekṣa* position is distinguished from a *sannyāsī* who is traditionally categorized as the last of the four *āśramas*, who holds compulsory duties such as the study of the *Vedas* and so on

⁶⁰ iha samśayaḥ | nirāśrameṣu vidyā sambhaven na veti vidyotpatti-hetutayā viśrutānām āśrama-dharmānām teṣv abhāvān neti

⁶¹ antarā cāpi tu taddṛiṣṭaiḥ (vidyā arises) even in those outside (varṇāśrama) as is it is seen

⁶² antarā ca vinaivāśrama-dharmān vidyamāneṣv autpattika-viraktiṣu prāg bhavānuṣṭhitair dharmaiḥ satya-tapo-japādibhiś ca pariśuddheṣu teṣv api vidyā udayate | kutaḥ tad-dṛṣṭeḥ | tādṛśyā gārgyā brahmavittva-darśanāt

Gārgī Vāchaknavī is provided as an example of someone who hadn't performed *karmas* in this life, nevertheless due to purification by attained by execution of *dharmas* in previous lives, is self-realized by virtue of knowledge and exempt from the jurisdiction of *karma*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* details her participation in a debate with Yājñavalkya at king Janaka's court.⁶³ In this regard, in *sūtra* 3.4.39,⁶⁴ the superior standing of the *nirapekṣa* is outlined in contrast to one within an *āśrama*, with reference to the case of Gārgī Vāchaknavī and her loftier position in comparison to Yājñavalkya. The prelude to this *sūtra* presents a doubt - it has been demonstrated that those within an *āśrama* such as Yājñavalkya and those outside of an *āśrama* such as Gārgī possess knowledge or *vidyā*. Amongst them are those within an *āśrama* or those outside of an *āśrama* better?⁶⁵ Baladeva in response reasons that the *nirapekṣas* such as Gārgī are superior, why? because of the mark of their greater knowledge as it is heard of [in scriptures].⁶⁶ A reassurance is also provided in his comments to *sūtra* 3.4.41 that such a *nirapekṣa* is not in danger of falling from their position and succumbing to an *āśrama*, for the *nirapekṣa*, enjoys pleasure in *Brahman*, thus there is no danger of falling from this state.⁶⁷ In this way, Baladeva illustrates even though a *nirapekṣa bhakta* remains outside the jurisdiction of the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system, they remain unfaltering in their practice due to their resolute absorption in *Brahman*.

Baladeva also asserts that the company of saints has the ability to purify and produce knowledge independent of *varṇāśrama-dharmas*. This is illustrated in Baladeva's comments to *sūtra* 3.4.37,⁶⁸ in which he states that the *nirapekṣa* practitioner by the strength of the association of saints easily acquires knowledge for liberation due to the special grace of the Lord, as verified by BP 2.2.37 and BP 5.12.12. Thus Baladeva, declares that due to actions in previous lives and by the power of saints, one is eligible to relinquish all obligations to perform *varṇāśrama-dharma* acts for the purpose of purification (*svaṇiṣṭha*) or for the sake of educating others (*pariniṣṭhita*)

⁶³ More details can be found in David Buchta's article on Gārgī Vāchaknavī. (David Buchta, "Gārgī Vāchaknavī as an Honorary Male: An Eighteenth Century Reception of an Upanisadic Female Sage", *The Journal of Hindu Studies* 3.3 (2010), p.354)

⁶⁴ *atas tv itaraj-jyāyo lingāc ca* (The other [nirapekṣa] is certainly better than this [one not in *āśrama*], due to the indications [from scriptures].

⁶⁵ *sāśramā yājñavalkyādayo nirāśramās ca gārgy-ādayo vidyāvanto darśitāḥ | teṣu sāśramāḥ śreṣṭhā nirāśramā veti samśaye,*

⁶⁶ *kutaḥ? lingāt | gārgyā mahā-vidyatva-śravaṇāt*

⁶⁷ In his comments, he quotes BG 8.16 which states, up to the abode of Brahma, all worlds are subject to rebirth, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), but having attained me (brahman), no rebirth exists. (*ā-brahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ punar āvartino 'rjuna mām upetya tu kaunteya punar janma na vidyate*)

⁶⁸ *api smaryate* (also it is mentioned in the *smṛti* texts)

and is subsequently considered a *nirapekṣa bhakta*.⁶⁹ Hence, through the description of the *nirapekṣa bhakta*, the superior nature of *bhāgavata-dharma* in comparison to *varṇāśrama-dharma* from the perspective of Baladeva is also once again evident.

The *nirapekṣa bhakta* is considered the highest of the three categories of *bhaktas* and this is further highlighted in Baladeva's comments to BG 12.13-19, in which the ideal qualities characterizing *bhaktas* are delineated. Baladeva postulates that each of these qualities appear within the three types of *bhakta* mentioned and in verse 19, he further states that these *dharmic* qualities such as non-enmity and so on, are universally accepted by the three types of *bhaktas*, the *saniṣṭha*, the *pariniṣṭhita* and the *nirapekṣa*, and understood to emerge proportionately according to the category of *bhakta*.⁷⁰ In other words, the qualities are imbibed to its highest degree in the *nirapekṣa* and in its lowest concentration in the *saniṣṭha*. This demonstrates the hierarchy between these categories. Thus, from analyzing Baladeva's comments to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and the *Brahma-sūtras*, an examination of his tripartite categorization of *bhaktas*, namely the *saniṣṭha*, *pariniṣṭhita* and *nirapekṣa bhaktas* has been undertaken. The table below is a summary of Baladeva's views:

Type of <i>bhakta</i>	Activities	Jurisdiction of <i>karma</i>
<i>Saniṣṭha</i> (or <i>Svaniṣṭha</i>)	Performs <i>varṇāśrama karmas</i> however avoids <i>kāmya-karmas</i> . Incidentally reaches the heavens as primary objective is to attain Brahman.	Mandatory performance of <i>varṇāśrama karmas</i> even after attaining knowledge.
<i>Pariniṣṭha</i> (or <i>Pariniṣṭhita</i>)	Executes <i>bhāgavata-dharma</i> and secondarily, if there is no conflict, performs <i>varṇāśrama-dharma</i> for the sake of benefiting the wider society.	The jurisdiction of <i>varṇāśrama karmas</i> dependent on the completion of <i>bhāgavata-dharma</i> duties. Examples - king Bharata.
<i>Nirapekṣa</i>	Engages solely in <i>bhāgavata-dharma</i> . Complete absorption in	No jurisdiction of <i>varṇāśrama-dharma</i> . Examples - Gārgī Vāchaknavī

⁶⁹ Baladeva also quotes *Bhagavad-Gītā* 10.9-10 in his comments to *sūtra* 3.4.38 which also illustrates that the *nirapekṣas* are special objects of grace and they easily attain knowledge.

⁷⁰ *san-niṣṭhādīnām tri-vidhānām bhaktānām sambhūya sthitā ete 'dveṣṭṛtvādayo dharmā yathā-sambhava-tāratamyenaiva sudhībhiḥ sangamanīyāḥ*

	<i>Brahman</i> , thus no danger of falling from this position.	
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The notion of *lokasaṅgraha* according to Viśvanātha

The notion of *lokasaṅgraha* is a principal feature of *karma-bhakti* relations. Having examined the significance of *lokasaṅgraha* in the *Karma-vivṛti* and the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, I will now explore its usage within the *Gītā* commentaries of Viśvanātha and Baladeva. I will begin by highlighting Viśvanātha’s promotion and engagement with the notion. Recollecting the ambiguity concerning his support of *karma* in light of *bhakti* practice, an endorsement by Viśvanātha on this concept would bolster the claim of a mandatory obligation to responsible public conduct defined by *karma* for the members of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect.

Returning to a verse that is frequently referenced in relation to the notion of *lokasaṅgraha*, *Bhagavad-Gītā* 3.20, in which Kṛṣṇa states that simply by executing *karma*, kings like Janaka, although situated in perfection were obliged to execute *karma* for the sake of benefiting the people of the world,⁷¹ an endorsement by Viśvanātha on the notion of *lokasaṅgraha* would anticipate an elaborate commentarial presentation here. However, Viśvanātha in his comments merely glosses over the term *lokasaṅgraha* describing the concept as the execution of *karma* to instruct the world.⁷² The lack of attention offered by Viśvanātha appears to diminish the significance of public responsibility based on the notion of *lokasaṅgraha*. However, his deployment of this verse in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* of Rūpa Gosvāmī suggests otherwise, indeed, he utilizes this precise verse, BG 3.20 to stress the critical role of *lokasaṅgraha* for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect member. This verse features as Rūpa Gosvāmī in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* asserts that the adoption of *bhakti* can nullify all sin, even destroying an individual’s *prārabdha-karma*, or the results of sins that have already manifest in this life i.e. body, family, caste and so on. To substantiate his claim, Rūpa refers to BP 3.33.6, which states:

Even if one is a ‘dog-eater’, he immediately becomes qualified to perform Vedic sacrifice if he hears or chants the name of the Lord,

71 karmaṇaiva hi saṃsiddhim āsthītā janakādayaḥ lokasaṅgraham evāpi sampāśyan kartum arhasi

72 yadi vā tvam ātmānam jñānādhikāriṇam manyase loke śikṣā-grahaṇārtham karmaiva kurvity āha loketi

offers respects, remembers the Lord, what to speak of one who has an audience with the Lord?⁷³

In response, Viśvanātha raises a possible objection - despite being eligible to execute sacrifices, why does the *bhakta* formerly a 'dog-eater' still not perform sacrifices? He responds to this doubt by declaring that such a person refrains from performing sacrifices as he does not place his faith and trust in such Vedic rituals ordained by *karma*. However intriguingly, in contrast, although not obliged, pure Vaiṣṇava householders execute such *karma*, setting ideal standards for the sake of the welfare of the people of the world. In this context, Viśvanātha refers to BG 3.20, to reinforce his standpoint, stressing that certain Vaiṣṇavas sustain public and social ideals regardless of their devotional status by offering a model example to benefit the wider society. In a similar fashion, he claims that the low caste person now Vaiṣṇava may abstain from performing certain Vedic duties despite now being eligible, to similarly avoid causing social disruption, since the general population may be unsettled by his sudden adoption of such activities. As such his abstention also constitutes a form of *lokasaṅgraha*.⁷⁴ Viśvanātha's comments on *lokasaṅgraha* in this setting therefore seem to insinuate that public responsibility is a serious concern for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, particularly in relation to the duties publically executed pertaining to one's social standing for the sake of maintaining social norms. In other words, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas should be sensitive to the public expectations of responsibilities pertaining to the prevailing social orders. Viśvanātha's perspective delineated in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* seemed to postulate the unsuitability of the execution of *karma* in the context of *bhakti* practice, however his position on *lokasaṅgraha* in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* indicates that there remains an obligation for *bhaktas* to execute *varṇāśrama karmas* under specific conditions. Viśvanātha alludes to the significance of the concept of *lokasaṅgraha* in relation to verse 1.2.13 of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, which states: 'Thus, best of the twice-born *brahmins*, according to the divisions of *varṇāśrama* by men, the perfection of executed *dharma* is to please Hari'.⁷⁵ In Viśvanātha comments, he asserts that *varṇāśrama-dharma* or duties pertaining to *karma* are a wasted endeavor for those pursuing *bhakti* and therefore ultimately unnecessary which appears to be a prevalent viewpoint in his *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* commentary. However, he remarks:

73 yan nāmadheya-śravaṇānukīrtanād yat prahvaṇād yat smaraṇād api kvacit śvādo 'pi sadyaḥ savanāya kalpate kutaḥ punas te bhagavan nu darśanāt

⁷⁴ O'Connell, "Karma in the Bhagavad-Gīta", p.103

⁷⁵ ataḥ pumbhir dvija-śreṣṭhā varṇāśrama-vibhāgaśaḥ, svanuṣṭhitasya dharmasya saṁsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam

Those *bhaktas* of the East [Bengal] and so on, even the resolute ones, only by pressure from family [attached] to *karma*, out of respect for that, causes one to perform *karma*. This is certainly not the cause of [actual] *karma* as they have acted without faith [as their faith remains only for *bhakti*].⁷⁶

Therefore, Viśvanātha acknowledges that even pure *bhaktas* may indulge in *karma* in extenuating circumstances such as family pressures, nevertheless they do so in such a way that does not jeopardize their *bhakti* status. To substantiate his declaration that pure *bhaktas* incur no reactions for the external performance of *varṇāśrama karmas*, Viśvanātha refers to BG 17.28: ‘That which is executed and performed as penance, charity and fire sacrifice without faith, is described as false, O son of Prthā and is not consequential after death nor in this life’.⁷⁷ In this example, although Viśvanātha is not explicitly promoting the practice of *lokasaṅgraha* as he seems to do with his usage of BG 3.20 explored earlier, nevertheless he concedes that pure *bhaktas* occasionally engage in *karma* for the sake of others such as obligations to family members. He also intriguingly postulates that this *karma* practice transpires in regions like Bengal, which was a major hub for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, perhaps indicative of how this province contrasted the practices adopted in Vṛndāvana. Viśvanātha also justifies such participation in *karma* by claiming that as long as one’s faith remains in *bhakti*, one is not impeded by such *karma* practice.

Returning to the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, another instructive passage on this matter from Viśvanātha is offered in his comments to *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.11 as he discusses the attitude an ideal *bhakta* displays towards *varṇāśrama* duties. Herein he cautions the *bhakti* practitioner over the dangers of *karma* and *jñāna* practice, but nevertheless declares that one can engage in these practices if configured in relation to *bhakti* appropriately. In this regard, Viśvanātha states the following:

The term ‘*śūnyam*’ as used before (in *anyābhiliṣitā-śūnyam...*) is not used. The import is to prohibit only *karma* and *jñāna*, covering *bhakti* [and not avoid them completely]. Performing *karmas* with faith due to

⁷⁶ tad api yat prācyādi-bhaktānām ananyānām api karmikula-saṅghaṭṭagatatvenaiva tad-anurodha-vaśād eṣat karma-karaṇam tat-karmākaraṇam eva tatra śraddhā-rāhityāt

⁷⁷ aśraddhayā hutam dattam tapas taptam kṛtam ca yat asat ity ucyate pārtha na ca tat pretya no iha

fear of sin in not performing obligatory *karmas* according to the command of prescriptions, certainly covers *bhakti*. And performing *karmas* with faith considering this the means of that which is desired as a form of *bhakti* is also a covering of *bhakti*. Therefore, for a great person who performs *karmas* such as *śraddha* offerings to his ancestors although without faith in them and for the sake of benefiting the people of the world, this is not considered outside pure devotion.⁷⁸

This perspective from Viśvanātha permits the coexistence or simultaneous practice of *bhakti* and *karma*, as long as one's faithful disposition is not jeopardized, preserving its shelter in *bhakti* only. In other words, *karma* should not conceal *bhakti* (*anāvṛtam*) rather than the practice of *karma* having to be shunned entirely (*śūnyam*). Therefore, if an individual's faith is deposited in *bhakti* only, despite engaging in *karma* for the benefit of others, this is still firmly within the boundaries of pure *bhakti*, consequently the superficial execution of *karma* is not essentially an inhibition for the practice of pure *bhakti* in consideration of this theological reasoning. This passage from Viśvanātha resembles the rationale for *karma* practice found in the concluding summary of *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* which also references *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.11 to illustrate that it is one's faithful disposition that determines the quality of one's *bhakti* irrespective of the adoption of *karma*.

These examples from Viśvanātha illustrate that pure Vaiṣṇavas are permitted occasionally to partake in or avoid *karmic* rituals to preserve traditional social customs for the benefit of the wider society. Despite the ambiguity concerning Viśvanātha's position on public responsibility, it is evident from this section that there remains a public responsibility for Vaiṣṇavas pertaining to social conduct and behavior. This public accountability is especially highlighted by Viśvanātha's appeal of adopting appropriate action to uphold established modes of behavior in the public domain by his deployment of BG 3.20 in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. However, Viśvanātha also stresses that if such *karma* is to be undertaken, it should be conducted cautiously and one's faith in pure *bhakti* should be guarded, thus having embraced such

⁷⁸ na tu pūrvavat tac-chūnyam ity arthaḥ | tena ca bhakty-āvarakāṇām eva jñāna-karmādīnām niṣedho 'bhipretaḥ | bhakty-āvarakatvam nāma vidhi-śāsanān nitya-karmākaraṇe pratyavāyādi-bhayāc chraddhayā kriyamāṇatvam | tathā bhakty-ādi-rūpeṣṭa-sādhanatvāc chraddhayā kriyamāṇatvam ca | tena loka-saṅgrahārtham aśraddhayāpi pitrādi-śrāddham kurvatām mahānubhāvānām śuddha-bhaktau nāvyaṅgītiḥ

precautionary considerations *karma* may be adopted. Viśvanātha’s position on *lokasaṅgraha* reveals further support for the practice of *karma* for a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava member.

The notion of *lokasaṅgraha* according to Baladeva

To complete our examination of *lokasaṅgraha* from the key Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava voices in this era, I will proceed to explore Baladeva’s perspective on this notion. The role of *lokasaṅgraha* according to Baladeva has already been introduced in our survey of the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta*. The principle of *lokasaṅgraha* was identified as the motivating force that propels the intermediate *bhakta* to participate in prescribed *karmas* pertaining to *varṇāśrama*, as evidenced in Baladeva’s comments in the introduction of the *Bhāgavad-Gītā*, BG 18.66 and BG 9.27 examined previously. In these examples, it has been emphatically illustrated by Baladeva that although the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* is exempt from the jurisdiction of *karma*, nevertheless he continues to engage in *varṇāśrama-dharma karmas* to benefit the wider society.

In respect to BG 3.20, a critical reference to the notion of *lokasaṅgraha*, Baladeva’s comments elucidate on the responsibilities of the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta*. He begins by stating that saints purify their hearts by executing *karma* and subsequently attain the perfection of self-realization⁷⁹, this is declared by Baladeva to encourage the uptake of *karma*. Baladeva proceeds to outline a *pūrvapakṣa*’s view who claims however you have stated that a *saniṣṭha* who realizes the self, no longer requires to execute *karma* [to realize the self], why then should a *pariniṣṭhita* who has realized his self and the Paramātmā be instructed in the practice of *karma*?⁸⁰ In response Baladeva conveys the following:

Yes, you are certainly as such [a *pariniṣṭhita bhakta*], nevertheless for the sake of benefiting the people of the world, you should execute *karma*. If me and Arjuna perform *karma*, the entire world will also execute their *karma*. If I act in a contrary manner, ignorant people

⁷⁹ karmaṇaivopāyena viśuddha-cittāḥ santaḥ samsiddhim svātmāvalokana-lakṣaṇām āsthitāḥ prāpuḥ

⁸⁰ nanu saniṣṭhasyātmāvalokane karmānuṣṭhānam nāstīty uktam | mama pariniṣṭhitasyāvalokita-sva-parātmanaḥ karmopadeśaḥ kuta iti

seeing my example, would abandon action and fall. Safeguarding the people of the world is the outcome.⁸¹

This passage from Baladeva in BG 3.20 conveys the critical significance of public responsibility derived from the notion of *lokasaṅgraha*. Even Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa himself were willing to bear the burden of orthodox *karma* practices for the welfare and protection of the general society, the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* is encouraged to adopt the same responsibility according to Baladeva. A few verses later in chapter three of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* Baladeva paraphrasing Kṛṣṇa, offers further instructions for the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* in BG 3.25. He states therefore, although you are fixed [in knowledge], for the benefit of the people of the world act according to your own *karma* as prescribed in the Vedas.⁸² He further adds, as an ignorant person executes *karmas* attached to desiring results, in the same way although one is full of knowledge (self-realized), he should execute *karmas*, however, detached [and] void of desire for the results.⁸³ These comments illustrate that the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* should execute *karma* superficially appearing just like a worldly minded person, whilst maintaining a spirit of detachment, for the sake of upholding ideal Vedic standards of conduct. These two references in chapter three of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* definitively outline the extent of public responsibility and engagement, grounded upon the notion of *lokasaṅgraha* for the *pariniṣṭhita bhaktas*.

The *pariniṣṭhita bhakta's* sacrifice of executing *varṇāśrama-dharmas* out of compassion for those less enlightened does not go unnoticed nor unrewarded. Indeed, they become recipients of an abundance of grace from the Lord as outlined in verse BG 9.27. Baladeva paraphrases Kṛṣṇa, stating therefore, due to benefiting the people of the world for my sake, you will receive my mercy in abundance.⁸⁴ Hence, Kṛṣṇa is extremely pleased with the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* who accepts the inconvenience of executing *karma*, although beyond its jurisdiction, purely for the welfare of other members within his public sphere. Baladeva elaborates further in this verse, declaring indeed, therefore to expel the Lord's troubles undertaken to benefit the people of the world, they [instead] act [to establish the model exemplar], bringing the Lord

⁸¹ satyam tvam tīrṣā eva tathāpi loka-sangrahāya karma kurv iti arjune mayi karma kurvāṇe sarvalokaḥ karma kariṣyati | itarathā mad-dṛṣṭāntenājño 'pi lokaḥ karma tyajan patiṣyatīti lokasamrakṣaṇam tat phalam

⁸² tasmāt pratiṣṭhite 'pi tvam loka-hitāya vedoktam sva-karma prakurv

⁸³ ajñā yathā karmaṇi saktāḥ phala-lipsayābhiniviṣṭās tata kurvanty evam vidvān api kuryāt | kintv asaktaḥ phala-lipsā-śūnyaḥ san |

⁸⁴ tena man-nimittasyāsyā lokasya sankgrahāt tvayi matprasādo bhūyān bhāvīti

pleasure.⁸⁵ In other words, the *pariniṣṭhita bhaktas* partake in the noble and selfless deed of relieving the Lord of the exertions to maintain ideal public standards in the world by instead personally acting in a manner that supports this objective. Their selfless acts do not go unnoticed, having brought great satisfaction to the Lord, which is the essence of *bhakti* practice, they are bestowed abundant grace from the Lord who rewards them profusely for adopting this modus operandi.

In these references Baladeva illustrates the precise nature of public responsibility, founded upon the notion of *lokasaṅgraha*, for the intermediate *bhakta* or the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta*. Consequently, Baladeva appeals for suitable action and conduct to be employed to uphold orthodox modes of living in the public arena. *Lokasaṅgraha* becomes the primary motivating force that implores the *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* to partake in *varṇāśrama-dharma* acts, further spurred on knowing that this behavior brings joy to the Lord and alleviates the Lord from his own labors to uplift the people of this world. The *pariniṣṭhita bhakta* is reassured that such efforts are not in vain and in accepting this burden the *pariniṣṭhita bhaktas* are rewarded copiously by the Lord. Baladeva's promotion of *lokasaṅgraha* reveals emphatically the vital importance of public responsibility for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect member in this era.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered perspectives from Viśvanātha and Baladeva regarding the relationship between *karma* and *bhakti*, and notions such as *lokasaṅgraha* derived primarily from the ideas outlined in their respective *Gītā* commentaries, the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* and the *Gīta-bhūṣaṇa*. This provides an insight into their theological positions on the extent of public engagement and responsibility necessitated for a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* practitioner. These unprecedented contributions on the *Bhāgavad-Gītā*, and of special interest for this thesis, their *karma-bhakti* perspectives may have been a response to the political pressures stemming from Jaipur, and thus, resemble to some degree the viewpoints illustrated in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and the *Karma-vivṛti*. It is evident from both these *Gītā* commentaries that Viśvanātha and Baladeva permit and often encourage the practice of *karma* in conjunction with the development of *bhakti*, revealing a compatibility between *karma* and *bhakti* which would have been an indispensable necessity in this period of reformation. Furthermore, in investigating the topic of *lokasaṅgraha* it is also demonstrated that there is a consciously developed public theology which operates beyond the principle of adopting *karma* until one is eligible to abandon it according to both Viśvanātha and

⁸⁵ | te hi svāmino loka-saṅgrahaṃ prayāsam apaniṣavas tathā tāny ācarantas taṃ prasādayantī

Baladeva, highlighted especially through their usage and comments on BG 3.20. Thus, from this analysis, it is apparent that for members of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect there is a public responsibility to abide by the scriptural codes and norms pertaining to *karma* and *varṇāśrama* whether for the purpose of purification or for the sake of *lokasaṅgraha*.

Comparing the positions offered by Viśvanātha and Baladeva on *karma-bhakti* relations with the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and the *Karma-vivṛti*, we notice some striking similarities, for instance, both presentations by Viśvanātha and Baladeva advocate an obligation to execute prescribed *karmas* for novice *bhaktas* as has been demonstrated in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and the *Karma-vivṛti*. The concept of *lokasaṅgraha* is a prevalent theme of the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and the *Karma-vivṛti*, and similarly Baladeva also stresses the uptake of *lokasaṅgraha*, for those who are *pariṇiṣṭhita bhaktas*, inducing them to execute *karma* acts to mitigate the Lord of his burden to elevate the people of this world. Viśvanātha also permits the execution of *karma* for the sake of social upliftment established on the notion of *lokasaṅgraha*, in order to sustain the prevalent social orders. However, Viśvanātha cautions a pure *bhakta* upon practicing both *karma* and *bhakti*, stressing that one's faith should remain only in *bhakti* and only then is one's pure *bhakti* status not concealed. This viewpoint resembles the position of the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* on the same matter, indeed, both Viśvanātha and *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* employ BRS 1.1.11 to substantiate this view. Furthermore, Baladeva's stipulation that the *sanīṣṭha bhakta* should continue to execute *karma* although having attained self-realization, reveals his overwhelming support for *karma*. This stance resembles Kṛṣṇadeva's avid promotion of *karma* in the *Karma-vivṛti*, even after having reached the very highest stages of *bhakti*.

Despite these similarities there are also tangible differences found between these authors and the works of *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* and *Karma-vivṛti*. For instance, if there is a conflict between *varṇāśrama-dharma* and *bhāgavata-dharma*, then Baladeva declares that a *pariṇiṣṭhita bhakta* should prioritize the execution of *bhāgavata-dharma* and subsequently will not incur sin for neglecting his responsibilities to *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Furthermore, highlighting the *nirapekṣa bhakta* category, Baladeva postulates that there exists a person who has no obligation whatsoever to execute *dharma* according to *varṇāśrama*, which resembles the *ananya-bhakta* found in Viśvanātha's writings. However, such a category of *bhakta* is not explicitly delineated in the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* nor the *Karma-vivṛti*, perhaps avoided attention to circumvent demoting the importance of *karma* in light of pure *bhakti* practice. Viśvanātha also continually extols the position of *bhakti* as most superior, for instance, by demonstrating *karma's* effectiveness as determined by its connection to *bhakti*. He even indicates that *karma* can be sidestepped altogether due to the independent power of *bhakti* which serves as a reminder of

the criticism Viśvanātha encountered in the *Karma-vivṛti* based on his reading of key passages in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*. However, Viśvanātha's frequent references to his innovative practice of *karma* recommended for a *bhakta*, which although a mixture of *karma* and *bhakti* is primarily constituted of the element of *bhakti*, symptomizes the rising significance of *karma* practice for Viśvanātha. Therefore, it appears that Baladeva and even Viśvanātha endeavored to address the politico-religious pressures pervading this period through their *Gītā* commentaries, however they did so in a way that did not compromise the superior status of *bhakti* within Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava philosophy. Nevertheless, such presentations provide inspiration for individuals who are concerned or embroiled in the political or social sphere.

CONCLUSION

In the course of this thesis, I examined the intersection of political power and religion in the early modern period through the case of a critical precolonial North Indian polity, the Kachvāhā dynasty, and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, a *bhakti* movement of growing significance in North India, some of whom had migrated from Bengal to settle in North India. This enabled us to explore the dynamic interactions between royal and religious institutions in this fascinating period. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava saints arrived in North India aspiring to revive Vṛndavāna's historical connection to Kṛṣṇa, fulfilling the wishes of Caitanya, the founder of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect. However, they were not unaided in this endeavor and they became increasingly reliant on the political powers of the day to attain their aspirations. The Kachvāhā dynasty became the most significant political influence upon the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect between the sixteenth and eighteenth century, with the celebrated Govindadeva deity rising to become a symbol of Kachvāhā prestige in North India. This Kachvāhā-Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava alliance reached its apex during the reign of Kachvāhā ruler Jai Singh II, who as well as being an effective statesman was also a passionate religious reformer whose dealings with the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect provide an insight into religion's functionality and its public importance in this historical framework.

The initial chapters of this thesis delineate the historical setting that conveys the politico-religious atmosphere pervading this era. I traced the relations between the Mughal emperors, the Kachvāhā monarchs and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, this coalition critically contributed to the prosperity but also the tribulations encountered by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community in Vṛndavāna. The early political scenario marked by the inauguration of Mughal emperor Akbar acted as a catalyst for the flourishing of Vṛndavāna, facilitating the ambitions of the pioneering Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect leaders. This fruitful period under the Mughal regime enabled political powers like the Kachvāhā royalty to participate in grand gestures of patronage in Vṛndavāna, without being considered a violation of their commitment to the Mughal establishment. Although, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect capitalized on the opportunity born from the Mughal-Kachvāhā governance, nevertheless the political alliance did not fulfill its potential. While, Akbar's era was a golden period for this alliance, which witnessed the Kachvāhās promoted to the highest standings in the Mughal court, and even though the alliance continued to fare reasonably in the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, however during Aurangzeb's rule there was a drastic decline in the alliance reflected in the desecration of Vṛndavāna. This challenging situation in Vṛndavāna seems to have been born, at least partly from suspicions of the Kachvāhās' involvement in the escape of Shivaji, which resulted in the frailest point so far in the Kachvāhā-Mughal alliance. Due to the precarious situation generated during the reign of Aurangzeb in Vṛndavāna, this

major hub of Vaisnavism witnessed an exodus of deities. The rapport between the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect and the Kachvāhā dynasty had been mediated by the deity of Govindadeva. The Kachvāhās had supplied grants, constructed a grand temple for Govindadeva and they had even been involved in the managerial facets of the temple. In response to this threat that confronted Govindadeva the Kachvāhās along with the custodians sought safe passage for the deity, eventually relocating to the safe haven of the new Kachvāhā capital city of Jaipur.

From this unforeseen development emerges a new chapter in Kachvāhā and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava relations which coincides with the demise of the Mughal regime in North Indian politics. The migration of Govindadeva and his subsequent elevation to the state deity brought with it several challenges. The environment in Jaipur was rife with religious competition and reform initiatives. Religious sects contested the new state deity's credentials and *brahmins* scholars were employed to assist the king in his endeavor to bridge *dharma* and statecraft that all sects were expected to endorse. Although, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect had enjoyed a privileged position with the Kachvāhā monarchs, however they had never been administered rigidly. However, in this period the sect entered an intensely political world and could no longer refrain from partaking in the court debates and discussions instigated by the political powers.

In this era, they encountered an onslaught of criticisms ranging from discrepancies in their genealogical affiliation claims, to their endorsement of the *parakīyā* doctrine over the *svakīyā* doctrine, to their ostensible disregard for orthodox conduct and moral norms in light of *bhakti* practice, which resulted for instance, in the followers of Rūpa Kavirāja being banned from both Jaipur and Vṛndavāna. The orthodox faction of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect responded by deploying representatives such as Krsnadeva Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya and Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa whom collaborated with Jaisingh, commissioning works and providing counsel to the king, thus facilitating his endeavors of religious organization and reformation. Baladeva's principal contribution entailed legitimizing the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect by offering a commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*, which also functioned to connect the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* with the Madhva *sampradāya*, one of the four accepted Vaiṣṇava lines. Krsnadeva on the other hand embarked on an extensive career as the official theological advisor to the king and participated in many of Jaisingh's ambitious religious schemes. One such mounting issue which Krsnadeva partook in, which is the focus of my thesis, entailed the obligation to integrate the practice of *bhakti* with the orthodox standards of public conduct demarcated by *karma* and *varṇāśrama* in this period. In consideration of the scarcity of works pertaining to *karma's* relation to *bhakti* within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect, several novel texts emerge in this era striving to assimilate *bhakti* practice within the public sphere. Works such as the *Karma-vivṛti* and *Karmādhikāra-nirnaya*, provided a theological rationalization and motivation for public responsibility. Texts born from such circumstances served as

critical works responding to the debates and discussions stemming from the Jaipur courts. These texts helped secure an acceptable place for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava thought within this political world and served as tools to validate its legitimacy and relevance amongst the myriad of *sampradāyas* prevalent at that time.

In the opening of chapter three I posed several select questions to invoke the exploration of foundational themes that underlie these specialized works. The first theme I embarked on examining was the compatibility between *karma* and *bhakti* practices, specifically investigating *karma*'s role in generating *bhakti*. This theme is a prominent subject in Kṛṣṇadeva's *Karma-vivṛti*, the text strives to establish harmony between *karma* and *bhakti* proposing persuasively that the practice of *karma* in the pursuit of *bhakti* is permitted and indeed encouraged. In the *Karma-vivṛti*, Kṛṣṇadeva ascertains the function and benefit of *karma* for the *bhakti* practitioner, reasoning authoritatively that *karma* offered to the Supreme is itself a form of *bhakti*. He substantiates his stance by drawing on the foremost teachers of the tradition, offering corrective readings for fundamental passages central to the promotion of *karma*'s value in consideration of *bhakti* practice. Although it was determined that *bhakti* is ultimately self-manifest, a core tenet of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology, thus dismissing the possibility that *karma* can ever be a direct cause of *bhakti*, nevertheless, upon further analysis it was established that the practice of *karma* offers a crucial contribution in preparing one sufficiently to be an adequate receiver of *bhakti*.

The second theme investigated entailed examining the ultimate jurisdiction of *karma* for a *bhakti* practitioner or in other words can or when should the injunctions pertaining to prescribed *karmas* be abandoned. Focusing on the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya*, it was determined that 'firm' faith in *bhakti* enables one to forsake the commands relating to prescribed *karmas*. Thus, only those persons who possess 'weak' faith in *bhakti* were obliged to execute *varṇāśrama karmas*. In light of this understanding it became apparent that there was no developed public theology which functioned beyond the principle of adopting *karma* until one is eligible to relinquish it, thus inferring complete devotion to Kṛṣṇa is not fundamentally compatible with the enactment of *karma*. Nevertheless, in consideration of the final theme, the examination of notions such as *lokasaṅgraha* and the responsibility to adhere to moral and behavioral norms, it was determined that even the advanced *bhakta* with firm faith must participate responsibly in the mundane world for the sake of the public good and this is not regarded as a violation of one's commitment to *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. These novel compilations fashioned in this era also provide precautionary measures and guidelines to ensure that one's faith remains only for *bhakti* whilst engaging in the external performance of *karma*, thus reassuring *bhakti* practitioners that partaking in *karma* does not necessarily impede one's progress in *bhakti*. In this way, these works convincingly illustrate that complete devotion to Kṛṣṇa and engagement

in worldly or public life is indeed compatible. Thus, formulating a sound theological rationalization to justify the uptake of public responsibility for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava member. Indeed, at times not merely illustrating the harmony between *bhakti* and *karma* but also reasoning that adopting *varṇāśrama karmas* are integral to the practice of *bhakti*. Therefore, in this period, in support of the king's endeavors and to avoid possible reprimands, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect were compelled to accede to the outward customs of *varṇāśrama*, so long as these delineated the standard mode of behavior within the public arena. This renewed attention on public conduct was also spurred on by cases such as that of Rūpa Kavirāja which typified why the *varṇāśrama* scheme became critical in this period as it demonstrated that premature practices would inexorably lead to moral misdemeanors in the pretext of *bhakti* practice.

In consideration that the *Karma-vivṛti* and the *Karmādhikāra-nirṇaya* feature several interrelated themes that encompass components of a public theology and rely on similar Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava authorities to substantiate their positions, both these works could be presumed to have been compiled in conjunction under the supervision of the king. Another curious divergence from the tradition's typical literary endeavors, materialized in the form of the first *Bhagavad-Gītā* commentaries from the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect produced by Viśvanātha and Baladeva, perhaps also fashioned compelled by the political pressures of this period. These works offer further views on *karma-bhakti* relations. Therefore, in analyzing this novel collection of works, I was able to highlight four different perspectives, those of Jaisingh, Kṛṣṇadeva, Viśvanātha and Baladeva, regarding the relevancy and accessibility of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachings and practices in the emerging social climate. In comparing and contrasting these viewpoints, as well as uncovering strong similarities such as the significance of *lokasaṅgraha*, we also notice striking differences, for instance, at times both Viśvanātha and Baladeva demote the significance of *karma* in light of pure *bhakti* practice. Nevertheless, it appears that Baladeva and even Viśvanātha, who is the target of criticism in the *Karma-vivṛti*, endeavored to address the concerns raised by Kṛṣṇadeva and Jaisingh through their *Gītā* commentaries, however they did so in a way that did not create ambiguity concerning the superiority of *bhakti*. Therefore, although *bhakti* essentially supersedes *varṇāśrama karmas*, there is nevertheless a form of *varṇāśrama* that functions in conjunction and cooperation with *bhakti* even at its highest stages without jeopardizing one's aspirations on the *bhakti* path.

The ultimate ambition of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas is to enrich one's relationship with Kṛṣṇa in this existence and beyond. The further one ventures on the path of *bhakti*, the less likely he or she will be inclined to be an enthusiastic participant in the worldly sphere. Indeed, up until this era, within Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava thought, there is an overarching idea of *bhakti* as salvific and worldly action as ancillary. In response to the changing socio-political climate of this period, novel works were born which embodied

a development in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect. The texts were specific tools employed by the tradition to connect the socially and politically engaged to the path of *bhakti*. All these works have in common that they promote a policy of flexibility for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community enabling the nurturing of devotion whilst partaking in public affairs. These works also empowered a king who was responsible for the governance of a culturally diverse population that was home to a conglomerate of adversary sects. Thus, although, all of the major works pertaining to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition prior to this point in history, had evaded tackling this matter directly, the socio-political scenario however in this era, invoked a shift in the literary trajectory of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, resulting in a concerted attempt to accommodate worldly engagement within *bhakti* theology as a consequence of Jaisingh seeking resources for governance.

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