O My Friend!
O My Friend!
Exchanging the Inner Life of A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

BABHRU DĀSA

FOREWORD BY SWĀMĪ B.V. TRIPURĀRĪ

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When I first met Śrīla Prabhupāda personally—when I first set eyes on him—tears of love the likes of which I had never experienced in this life showered forth from my eyes and Kṛṣṇa nāma danced effortlessly on my tongue. At that time I was filled with one thought and one thought alone: “Once again I have met my long-lost friend. Out of love for me, as if after a long separation, he has sought me out.” Shortly thereafter I thought, “Even if everyone else here leaves him, I will never stray from his shelter.” This experience, meeting Śrīla Prabhupāda, has set the course for my entire adult life and onwards into eternity.

But who is Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda? Yes, he is the jagad-guru of modern-day Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism, the world guru, whom some know as their spiritual master, while others are also his disciples but know it not. He has built a bridge from East to West and crossed it back and forth, planting seeds of bhakti in the West while tilling its soil, and nourishing the seeds sown in the East by others as well as planting there anew. He is the great emissary of Kṛṣṇa bhakti doing gauravāṇi-pracārīne. Indeed, he is the very extension of Gaura līlā, a tidal wave from the depths of the ocean of love of God risen up and reaching out to drown even the distant shores with the blessing of Nitāicānd. Yet all of this and more with regard to his extraordinary preaching campaign is but the tip of the iceberg of who he is, the surface of the oceanic depth of his love of God. Who then can fathom that depth, the inner wealth of this saffron-clad trīdāṇḍi-bhikṣu?

As daunting as it may seem, it is we who must take up this task in earnest and answer definitively who he is, for it is only by answering this question through the sincerity of our spiritual practice that we will ever really know who we are. Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has told us that
while Śrī Guru is directly God, at the same time he is dear to God, *kintu prabhōr yah priya eva tasya*. Śrī Guru is directly Hari, but as we look more closely with eyes of love, we find that he or she embodies a particular relationship with Kṛṣṇa. As *sādhanā* is perfected, *bhāva* manifests and with it eyes to see Śrī Guru in terms of his or her love for Kṛṣṇa. While Śrī Guru is God in a representational sense, he or she is love of God in every respect. Our guru is the very embodiment of a particular spiritual sentiment with a corresponding form, and realizing that form has much to do with realizing our own *svarūpa*.

Daunting indeed, but fortunately, and I should say characteristically in that it is perhaps his mercy that characterizes him more than anything else, Śrīla Prabhupāda has not left us entirely in the dark. The light of his inner life shines forth here and there for the discerning disciple. He himself has pointed us in the direction, and the present booklet has collected his indications in one place for the first time, reasoned about them in consonance with revelation, and considered possible objections. The conclusion, I believe, is obvious.

It is obvious and it is important. It is obvious because in this booklet we have allowed Śrīla Prabhupāda to speak for himself. The author’s task has largely been to merely underscore the significance of all that Śrīla Prabhupāda has said about himself. It is important because it emphasizes the often-forgotten truth that love of Kṛṣṇa is an affair of the purified heart, a subjective reality that constitutes the perfection of each devotee, regardless of its variety.

Thus the present text is centered on the *bhāva* of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, a subject of immense importance to his disciples. While the inner life of His Divine Grace is left to each disciple to realize in detail, the general direction that he himself, through his own words and actions, has pointed to is explored in the pages ahead. The genesis of the text lies in an online discussion among my stu-
dents and myself in which external evidence of Prabhupāda’s spiritual sentiment was collected. Sometime later I asked my Godbrother Śrīman Babhru dāsa to compile this evidence into one document. This initial compilation turned into an article, which was then edited and added to by myself and my student Vṛndārāṇya devī. My hope is that it will be appreciated for what it is in its most basic sense: Śrīla Prabhupāda speaking to us about his inner life.
Offering prostrated obeisances at the feet of my eternal spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, I undertake an attempt, however feeble, to explore the depths of his character and the breadth of the sampradāya coming from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He is the best of millions of jagad-gurus, having taken his own guru’s order on his head, becoming thus empowered to bring Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism all over the world and then back to Bhāratavarṣa. I also offer my obeisance to all his followers, who have been inspired by his example and dedicated their lives to practicing and sharing the teachings of Śrī Caitanya, carrying them in their hearts to some of the most unlikely places in the world. Their association and kindness are the spirit of my spiritual life, and I pray they may find pleasure, nourishment, and satisfaction in what they read here.

I have been asked why I would write something exploring Śrīla Prabhupāda’s inner life. Many believe that it is a topic better left alone. Although it is true that our ācāryas have warned against indiscreet discussion of one’s own inner life, the eternal spiritual identities of most of our previous ācāryas is not a mystery but rather an open secret, a treasured jewel of insight. This insight, true to the admonition against revealing one’s inner life, is generally not revealed openly during an ācārya’s lifetime but rather after his disappearance, gleaned mostly from indications from his divine life and the corresponding realizations of his disciples.

The disciples of Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura discerned that their spiritual master is a mañjarī whose name is Nayana-maṇi. The only external evidence for this, as far as I have been able to ascertain, is a single letter Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura wrote to one of his disciples. Similarly, the Godbrothers of Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja have determined that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s request to hear Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja sing “Śrī Rūpa-maṇjarī-pada” to him as he prepared to leave
the world indicated that Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had admitted Śrīdhara Mahārāja into his own circle of mañjarīs under Rūpa-mañjarī. (Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja, in his typical humility, concluded that he had been posted at the gate.) And the disciples of Śrīpād Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja have also inferred from a few things, such as the names of the Deities he installed at all of his māṭhas (all of which contained the name Vinoda), the color he chose to paint one of the steps to the altar at the Devānanda Gauḍīya Māṭha in Navadvīpa, and perhaps his own brahma-cāri name (Vinodabihari dāsa) that their guru must be a mañjarī named Vinoda-mañjarī whose dress in the nitya-līlā was green. So there’s a precedent for such discussion, even among the followers of those renowned for their reticence in discussing such matters.

Not unexpectedly, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s inner spiritual identity has been a topic of discussion over the years. Contradictory opinions, however, suggest that there is still room for further exploration. In this booklet, I hope to extend the
discussion by presenting the surprisingly numerous indications of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s spiritual identity that arose in his life and mission. I believe that an unbiased assessment of this evidence sheds substantial light on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s inner spiritual identity. Moreover, I believe that the exploration of this topic by various exalted devotees has yielded a wealth of nectar that enriches our understanding and appreciation of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s character and mission. It may also show how desirable it is to have some interest in such topics and indicate the breadth of our movement’s ideals, the range of the goals attainable by those following our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s Jaiva Dharma shows that there is room for subjectivity in regard to one’s vision of Śrī Guru: Vijaya-kumāra and Vrajanātha saw their guru as representing mādhurya and sakhyā-rasa, respectively. This apparent discrepancy is due to the fact that while Śrī Guru is a particular jīva soul, the sakti of guru-tattva is simultaneously within him and he can therefore represent any rasa. Thus although disciples’ budding spiritual sentiments may color their perception and allow for more than one vision of Śrīla Prabhupāda, ultimately he is who he is: he has one eternal rasa in Kṛṣṇa līlā. What I offer here is my humble attempt to gather in one place the evidence that sheds light on his inner life and my reflections on the significance I see in that evidence, especially as it is illuminated by śāstra and sādhus. Although the majority of the evidence, including several disciples’ accounts of direct statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself, points in one direction, I remain open to compelling evidence to the contrary. Further, I anticipate that this booklet will stimulate further discussion of the topic, and I look forward to hearing more memories and insights on the unlimited nectar of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s life. Let us by all means churn the ocean of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s glories until we generate a tidal wave of kīrtana and then ride the waves of that kīrtana for all we are worth!
I should also respectfully mention that of much less interest to me than hearing further evidence in the form of memories is to hear ideological debate, specifically the well-worn debate over whether all ācāryas in our line must be in mādhuryarasa. Although for me this idea has been contradicted by statements of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura, Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdharā Mahārāja, Bhakti Promode Purī Mahārāja, and our own Śrīla Prabhupāda, I have still included in this booklet a more thorough rebuttal of this idea for those who would argue otherwise.

The evidence I present here comes from many quarters and goes back to before my own dedicated involvement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It came over the course of many years, much of it through conversation with other devotees. In a recent online conversation, a great deal of this information came together as if of its own accord. I owe a debt of gratitude to the devotees who engaged in that conversation, especially to Swāmī B. V. Tripurārī, who inspired me to begin this endeavor and who has continued to encourage and advise me. I also have found support in the friendship of other Godbrothers, particularly Bhakti Viśrambha Mādhava Mahārāja and Vidagdha Mādhava dāsa. And the ultimate inspiration comes, of course, from Śrīla Prabhupāda himself. Anything that has any value in this essay is due to their mercy; any shortcomings, faults, or offenses are my responsibility alone.
2. Examining the evidence
The external evidence pointing to the nature of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s svarūpa is considerable. As we shall see, it includes statements made by his disciples that he himself made no effort to edit (his silence indicating tacit agreement), statements by his disciples that he openly acknowledged, and his own incontrovertible statements. Further evidence has come from the realization of sādhus of world renown, who have reflected on his worldwide preaching campaign and supported their conclusions with āstātra-yukti. Evidence is also found in his writing. Finally, the spirit of his preaching campaign also speaks clearly to us as to the nature of his svarūpa, as it is the ācārya’s inner life that motivates his outreach.

Let us begin by examining the early days of his campaign in the West. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples often noticed things he said and did that provided glimpses into the nature of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. For example, Govinda dāsī shares this among her remembrances of her time with Śrīla Prabhupāda in the early days of his preaching in North America:

Gaurasundara and I remained in Montreal for the duration of time that Swamijī was in India; that was about six months. During that time we drew many pictures for early Back to Godhead magazines, and daily we worked in our small art studio while hearing Caitanya-caritāmṛta and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. During that time I began working on a drawing of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma returning home with their cows, millions of cows. It became a kind of meditation. Daily I worked on this drawing and although we had little information of how Vṛndāvana looked, it seemed to manifest from within the heart. Though we did many other pictures, this picture was the most dear to me. Even when I close my eyes I would still see an ocean of cows with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma
prancing before them and in my view, over to the right, that cowherd boy was clearly meant to be Śrīla Prabhupāda. After all, Swamiji had requested me to paint his portrait in San Francisco, and it was one of the first pictures I painted for him. Now I felt I was painting his spiritual portrait in Goloka. It was an innocent offering. I sent a copy of the drawing to Swamiji in Vṛndāvana, saying, “This cowherd boy is my portrait of you.”

Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for giving me that glimpse of Goloka. It spurred me on in my desire to serve you; even now when I see this picture, my original drawing has been colored in and hangs behind the Deities of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, I think of you as I see you walking beside Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, herding the cows home in the evening, and I think that this is no accident that this very picture that I had offered to you so many years before is your portrait
walking beside your beloved Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma and you are there nearby.

About this picture, Govinda dāsī later remarked,

I didn’t know what Vṛndāvana looked like, but the picture was done from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s descriptions and, moreover, from his guidance within the heart. His bhakti shone through the work of all the artists at that time and the bhakti was real, as it was his. We were just workers, marionettes. The drawing had a cowherd boy to the left of Kṛṣṇa. In my vision, then, this was Śrīla Prabhupāda. I sent a copy of it to him as a gift with a note saying, “This is your cowboy form with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma.” Strangely enough, this didn’t seem out of place at the time. It was not precocious or assuming; it was just my simple perception. There was no reply and no discus-
sion about it. It was pretty much a common understanding amongst all of us disciples at that time that Śrīla Prabhupāda was a cowherd boy.

We see evidence of how common this perception was among early disciples in comments by others from those early years. In her 2003 Vyāsa-pūjā offering, Mālatī dāsī remembers a similar innocent insight from another devotee in the early days:

I recall an intimate moment when you increased the mystique of your being here among us foolish boys and girls. Nonchalantly recalling how as a child you always got your way, you proceeded to tell a little vignette about your desire for a cowboy pistol. Finally, after much insistence, your father complied and bought you a toy gun. But you were not to be satisfied until you had two guns, one for each hand.

“Oh,” said Harṣarāṇī, “you were a cowboy!” With complete gravity, you replied, “Yes.” At that second, no one was thinking of you and the Wild West. We just knew you were speaking about being with Kṛṣṇa and the cows in Vṛndāvana. We were only spiritual toddlers at best (it was ’67 or ’68), but you mercifully gave us a glimpse into your heart. I felt very small being there with you at that moment.

After that incident, the same devotee penned a short poem about you. In it she described you as playing leapfrog in a pasture with Kṛṣṇa and the cows and other gopas. It seemed funny and frivolous to us, yet you gravely remarked, “She has become advanced,” and ordered that it be printed in Back to Godhead magazine.

Govinda dāsī also remembers Harṣarāṇī’s poem and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s other, similar dealings with her in this mood.
She shared this in a letter to my Godbrother B. V. Mādhava Mahārāja:

Occasionally he acted this part of a cowherd boy, especially in Seattle when Harṣarāṇī was there. She was very finely tuned to the mystical and otherworldly things. Early on, she had an uncanny understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda. In 1968, while Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Montreal, she sent him a poem. The gist of her poem was: I offer my humble obeisances to my Spiritual Master, who is running among the trees, playing hide and seek with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa... etc. I read the poem to Śrīla Prabhupāda and was a little amazed. But I was even more amazed when he became quietly blissful and said, “Yes, she has become advanced. Print this poem in our BTG.” I sent it in for publication, but I’ve searched and never found it. Perhaps they didn’t print it.

In 1968, in Seattle, Harṣarāṇī, Kārttikeya and I all lived with Śrīla Prabhupāda. He was very informal and because she had an understanding of his līlā form, he often acted accordingly, often playful and mischievous as a cowherd boy. It was very esoteric. I had never seen this before, but Harṣarāṇī seemed to bring out this side.

And yes, he did exclaim, “I want to go to Kṛṣṇaloka so I can have His lāḍḍus and kacaurīs,” while sitting in a joyful trance-like state while in New York. And then he added, “If you make me lāḍḍus and kacaurīs, I will bless you!” So Kārttikeya and I quickly said, “Oh, please teach us to make them, and we will make them for you.” And he did.

We may note that Govinda dāsī and Mālatī’s accounts of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s response to Harṣarāṇī’s poem are identical. We may also note that the poem was indeed published in Back
to Godhead as Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed and can be found in the Bhaktivedānta VedaBase, as well as in the Bhaktivedānta Archives’ 60 Years of Back to Godhead Magazine. Here is the text of her poem, as published in Back to Godhead #17 in 1968:

Dear Swamiji

I offer my respects unto the Lotus Feet of my Spiritual Master,
Who is always herding cows
In Goloka Vrindaban with His Dearest Friend, Krishna.
Sometimes He is running barefoot
Through the forest chasing cows
And sometimes He is hiding behind
A tree waiting for Krishna to Return with the spoils from
Mother Yasoda’s butter pots.
I offer my respects unto the Lotus Feet of my Spiritual Master, Who is Always thinking of what He can Do in service of His Dearmost Friend Krishna and never wanting Anything in return.

Other devotees also wrote Vyāsa-pūjā offerings early on expressing insights similar to Harśarāṇi’s. In 1969, Devānanda wrote of Śrīla Prabhupāda,

He is the promise of Lord Chaitanya to overflood the world with Kṛṣṇa’s Names enchanting. He is the Spiritual Messenger, the Lord’s Angel of Mercy, the sweet harbinger and bringer of the Lord’s Own Flute Song charming all souls to the Lotus Land of Brajadhama, Kṛṣṇa’s Own Who knows His Mind. This Cowherd of Goloka is expert in extracting milk of heart’s pure desire. O’ How He works such arts as these!

Jyotirmayī dāsī wrote in 1970,

Śrīla Prabhupāda, here on Ilavati Varsa, you are the master at whose feet all masters are assembled, but in Goloka Vṛndāvana. Who are you? What is your name, cowherd boy, playing in the field with Kṛṣṇa and thousands of cows and calves? As you walk, the grass at once under the touch of your lotus feet regains its consciousness and its love and raises high its fragile limbs.

That same year Jāmbavati dāsī wrote,

Golden in Kṛṣṇa’s radiant smile, You are dancing as a cowherd boy.
So kindly help us sing Your glories far and wide, 
O saint among the highest.

And, again in 1970, Jadurāṇī dāsī wrote,

You are always absorbed in the loving affairs of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and if we hear from you and follow your instructions, then we can also enter into the kingdom of Vṛndāvana. When you saw the photograph of Kārtamaśāyī in your apartment on the Bowery you told me I like that doll, and My desire is to be His friend. You are always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, and He also cannot separate His mind from you. You are one of the Lord’s dear friends in Vṛndāvana, who is sometimes chasing the shadows that the birds make on the ground, sometimes shouting ill names into the well, sometimes imitating the sounds of the animals, sometimes sharing Lord Kṛṣṇa’s lāḍḍus and
kacaurīs and sometimes hearing Him tell jokes at lunch.

We find a similar sentiment expressed in the offering of the Auckland, New Zealand temple in 1972:

You are Prabhupāda
the little Cowherd Boy from Goloka
And when You wander
round Your room
Looking at pictures
of Kṛṣṇa and His friends
We realize how foolish we are
to have ever thought You an old man

All of the references to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s imputed friendly relationship with Kṛṣṇa in Vyāsa-pūjā offerings are too numerous to cite here. Some devotees may object that these are sentimental speculations from inexperienced devotees. We should note that not only did Śrīla Prabhupāda never refute them, but that there is no record that he ever even voiced any objection. Anyone who was involved with ISKCON in 1970 no doubt remembers the strength of his response to the deviant preaching of four new sannyāsīs. If he had had any objection to such expressions of faith as these, he would have stopped them cold. Moreover, these statements are in line with the sentiments expressed by Haṭarāṇī which Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed. What is more, I can find no Vyāsa-pūjā offerings made during Śrīla Prabhupāda’s manifest pastimes suggesting that he is either a gopī or a maṅjarī.

Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes hinted at similar feelings in relaxed, intimate dealings with his disciples. On Gaura-pūrṇimā 2008, speaking in Māyāpura, Śrutakīrti dāsa described an incident in 1975. Śrīla Prabhupāda was on a whirlwind world tour, seeing hundreds of devotees chanting and dancing in temples where Gaura-Nitāi were being wor-
shipped, everywhere. One day while visiting ISKCON’s Atlanta temple, Śrīla Prabhupāda apparently became stunned in ecstasy. Because Śrīla Prabhupāda consistently contained any expression of bhāva, this caught the devotees off guard. Ultimately, they started a kīrtana, and Śrīla Prabhupāda returned to external consciousness. Śrutakīrti tells us what Prabhupāda was like later, in his room:

But one thing I have to tell you that happened there. As I said, Prabhupāda was...something I had not experienced so much before...he just had this ecstasy that...it just began escaping from him. He was always in control of that, but it was just happening. So every night I would massage Prabhupāda in his room there. For three days he stayed there; his quarters are still there just as when he stayed there. So as Prabhupāda was lying down in bed, he had his head up a little bit on the pillow, and I was rubbing his
legs and rubbing his feet. So the massage was going on for 10 or 15 minutes.

Prabhupāda’s massage in the evening was the most personal intimate time to be with Prabhupāda. The lights were out, the room was dark. There would be some light from wherever, and no one ever entered Prabhupāda’s room while he received his evening massage, no one ever came into Prabhupāda’s quarters. So it was just him and his servant. So as I was massaging, Prabhupāda all of a sudden said, “I like the cowherd boys very much.” When he would speak in the evening it was nothing but nectar, always nectar. So I just continued, never stopped massaging. And he was looking at the picture, big painting on the wall at the foot of his bed, and he was just looking into it. So I looked and I realized he was looking at this picture of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, and They were just young boys, eight years old, and with Them there were thousands of cowherd boys and calves, and they were just in the forest of Vṛndāvana. So Prabhupāda was looking at that. So I am massaging.

Then he said, “Every day Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma would go into the forest in Vṛndāvana. Before they would go, Their mothers would make lunches, prepare tiffins for Them.” I’m just shaking my head. Prabhupāda is speaking very softly. Prabhupāda is just there, right there inside that scene, and he is speaking about it. When Prabhupāda talked, he would just bring you, he would transport you right there. So he said, “Kṛṣṇa’s mother Yaśodā, she would make very nice tiffin and in it there would be purī, halava, kacaurī, lāḍū. And the other cowherd boys, their mothers were not so opulent so their tiffins would have chapati, rice, subji, like that.”

And then he said, “Then they would go and they would play all day, and they didn’t have the
cows. They are just little boys so they would have the calves. The calves were with them. Then finally they would stop for lunch. Sometimes one of the cowherd boys would steal Kṛṣṇa’s lunch and begin throwing it around; they would play keep-away with Kṛṣṇa.” I’m just massaging the whole time. He said, “Finally the cowherd boys would throw their lunch to Kṛṣṇa, and they would sit down with His lunch and they would eat purī, halava, kacaurī, and lāḍḍu. And Kṛṣṇa would sit with them and He would eat the rice, chapati, and subji.”

He was smiling so brightly. And then he stopped, and I’m still massaging. Then he said, “I just want to go back to the spiritual world and eat kacaurī and lāḍḍu with Kṛṣṇa.” Then he closed his eyes and didn’t say anything more, and I just kept massaging. So it was something very rare.
This incident seems not to be an isolated comment he made only on this occasion. Rather, it echoes an earlier intimate moment in New York, in 1968, as recounted in Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswāmī’s Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta:

One day, while Prabhupāda was sitting in his room receiving his massage, he began talking and laughing. As he sat on the floor with one leg tucked under his body and one leg outstretched before him, he told the two or three devotees present how Kṛṣṇa, carrying the lunch His mother had packed for Him, would go to the forest with His cowherd boyfriends, who were also carrying lunches from home. Kṛṣṇa and His friends would all sit together sharing their lunch, and Kṛṣṇa always had the best lāḍḍus and kacaurīs. Prabhupāda’s eyes flashed, and he rubbed his hands together, smiling. “I simply want to go to Kṛṣṇaloka, so I can have some of Kṛṣṇa’s lāḍḍus and kacaurīs. I do not have any great diversion from this. I simply want to go there so that I can enjoy eating lāḍḍus and kacaurīs with Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys.” Opening his eyes widely, he glanced at Devānanda, who was massaging him, and at the others in the room. “Oh,” he said to them, “if you will give me lāḍḍus and kacaurīs, then I will bless you.”

Commenting on this incident in an online discussion with some disciples and friends, Swāmī B. V. Tripurārī wrote,

Here Prabhupāda expresses the mood of the vidū-śaka (jester) and priyanarma Madhumaṅgala. Batu, as he is sometimes called, is a brāhmaṇa friend of Kṛṣṇa. He is a big eater, and religion means to feed brāhmaṇas. He often bargains with Kṛṣṇa for more sweets by offering him his blessings in jest. In the
last line above, Prabhupāda is imitating negotiating with Kṛṣṇa.

Another instance occurred in Vṛndāvana, in 1977: One day while sitting with Śrīla Prabhupāda, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa began to describe the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa as depicted in the painting hanging to the right of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s āstādam table. The painting showed Kṛṣṇa and his cowherd friends eating lunch. Śrīla Prabhupāda looked at the painting and then, closing his eyes and thinking of the līlā, said, “This is the highest perfection of life.” We should not discount the possibility that there is considerable significance in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mind drifting toward Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes with his cowherd-boy friends. After all, as Indradyumna Swāmī recounted in a recent class, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained on one occasion that the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra means, “O my friend! O my friend!”

Occasionally, however, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke even more
directly. Govinda dāṣī recalls, “In the car in Seattle in 1968, he was talking about this and said, ‘My Guru Mahārāja’s rasa is that of gopī, mañjarī, but I am in relationship with Kṛṣṇa as cowherd boy.’” Subala dāsa, another devotee from the early days, recalls another such incident: “When Prabhupāda came for a visit, I got Dr. Kapoor to come with me to ask about it [discussing one’s siddha-deha]. Prabhupāda said, ‘This is not done in our line. One must realize his relationship for himself. One cannot just jump ahead. When one is ripe and ready, it will be revealed from within...I am a cowherd boy.’” Another time, in a 1977 recorded and published discussion on inauthentic gurus, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Svarūpa-siddhi means when he is actually liberated, he understands what is his relationship with Kṛṣṇa. That is svarūpa-siddhi. Sakhyā.”

On another occasion, on hearing that some of his Godbrothers had conjectured that he was in sakhya-rasa because he had installed Gaura-Nitāi Deities around the world and Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma in Vṛndāvana, he just smiled a little and said, “They say that, do they?” Śrīla Prabhupāda did not comment further but seemed quite comfortable with their assessment.

On still another occasion in which Prabhupāda entertained a discussion of his svarūpa or spoke directly about it, Hṛṣīkeśānanda asked Śrīla Prabhupāda about the nature of the disciple’s relationship with the guru in our sampradāya:

**HD:** Gurudeva, what about rūpānuga-bhakti? What is the eternal relationship between us and you?

**ACBSP:** (Prabhupāda quotes the second half of śloka 6 of Gurgvāṭakam.) Guru is serving under his master and you all can do likewise. In nitya-līlā every devotee thinks like that, that my master is the most dear to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

**HD:** So that means that my relationship with you is eternal, that it will continue in nitya-līlā?
ACBSP: Yes.
HD: As mañjarīs?
ACBSP: Down to sakhyā.
HD: But for rūpāṇugas isn’t it always mañjarī-rasa?
ACBSP: That is the highest; but in the spiritual world there is no such distinction.

Here we find five separate instances directly dealing with the question of Prabhupāda’s sthāyi-bhāva. In three of them, Prabhupāda directly tells his disciples that he is Kṛṣṇa’s sakhā. In Subala’s remembrance it is noteworthy that he himself was and remains uninterested in sakhyā-rasa.

In the third instance, speaking on the topic of svarūpa-siddhi, Prabhupāda says, “sakhyā.” There is no logical explanation for his concluding word “sakhyā” other than that it is his personal preoccupation. In the fourth instance, Prabhupāda hears his Godbrothers’ opinion that he was situated in sakhyā-rasa. This occurred in sacred Vṛndāvana where
some of them had assembled. He was often not fond of their opinions and was quick to respond to them to set the record straight in the minds of his disciples, but here he simply smiles as if to say, “They got it right this time.”

Finally we have an instance in which Prabhupāda is directly asked by one of his disciples about his relationship with Prabhupāda in Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s nitya-līlā. Hṛṣīkeśānanda asks if he and all of Prabhupāda’s disciples are related to him in Kṛṣṇa līlā in mañjari-bhāva and Prabhupāda replies “down to sakhyā.” It is virtually impossible to construe Prabhupāda’s responses and statements above in any other way than as an affirmation of his affinity for sakhyā-rasa. Assembled together as they are above, they make for very compelling evidence.
3. Sadhus’ perspectives
In addition to the evidence presented thus far, we also have the realizations and spiritual logic of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s longtime friend and Godbrother Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja, who was recognized by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura as śāstra-nipuna, one who knows the śāstra in great depth, a scriptural genius. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s association with Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja goes back to 1929 and includes six years of living together in Calcutta. Reflecting on his many years of friendship with Śrīla Prabhupāda, Prabhupāda’s worldwide preaching campaign, and his writing, especially his “Prayer to the Lotus Feet of Kṛṣṇa,” written on the Jaladuta, Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja offered his own perspective on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s inner mood:

I think he has given the hint in his own autobiography. When he was going to America, on the journey he expressed his feeling to play with Kṛṣṇa in sakhyā-rasa: kata bane chuṭāchuṭi bane khāi luṭāpuṭi sei din kabe habe mor, “Running and frolicking in the many forests of Vraja, I will roll on the ground in spiritual ecstasy. O when will that day be mine?” This was his “Prayer to the Lotus Feet of Kṛṣṇa.” When he was passing through the Atlantic, he gave vent to feelings that may be the salient points in his Vraja līlā. It struck me like that, Vṛndāvana sakhyā-rasa.

When he departed from this consciousness of worldly preaching propaganda, then he is there. It is clearly expressed in these sayings there in the Atlantic. He discovered the unmanifest (aprakāta) pastimes in Vṛndāvana, and in Vṛndāvana he established Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma and Gaura-Nitāi. That is indicative of sakhyā-rasa. From this we can conclude that he is in sakhyā-rasa, and he has entered into those pastimes. This is my understanding about his present position. He has expressed himself, his eternal posi-
tion, the acme of his aspiration. In Vṛndāvana he has established Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa and Nitāi-Gaura, and he is saying like that, Nitāi-Gaura are Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. It’s almost clear that he comes from that group. And now he’s again there. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

He expressed his own position in eternal līlā in his poem. I conjecture like that. Hare Kṛṣṇa! In his diary in Bengali he wrote, “Today I cooked some bati-caccari. It was quite delicious. So I ate something. Today I expressed my inner feelings to my friend and wrote a poem about that.”

And that friend came to his aid. He was so earnest in his prayer to Kṛṣṇa that he might be able to discharge the duty that had been given to him by his Guru Mahārāja that Kṛṣṇa came down to help him, his friend helped him in this propaganda work. So śaktyāveśa-avatāra. I take him; I cannot but take him to be so."
Addressing Kṛṣṇa he wrote, “You are my eternal friend. Forgetting You, I have come to this world and I have been suffering the kicking of Māyā, the goddess of misconception. If You come to help me in this campaign, then after finishing this I can again join You. When I shall be united with You again. I shall wander along with You the whole day in keeping the cows in the forest. Running this side and that side in the jungle, in the forest. And then, lutsāputi, to fall on the ground in different shows of play. I aspire after that day. I have got this good chance to serve my Gurudeva. For that reason my heartfelt appeal to You is that You please come to help me. I am Your eternal servitor; therefore, so much aspiration I have got for You. You, no other, are my only resort.”

So after performing this service, he aspires after a life in the cow-keeping līlā of Kṛṣṇa, and he is appreciating that sort of friendly service of Kṛṣṇa very much from the core of his heart, his aspiration after finishing his worldly preaching campaign.

I take it that Nityānanda Prabhu has given some special recognition to the section of the suvarṇa-vanīk community from which Swami Mahārāja has come. He has special grace for that particular section and the preaching about Gaurāṅga, and this is mentioned in the scriptures. The suvarṇa-vanīk are the most favorite section of Nityānanda Prabhu. It is mentioned in the śāstra, Caitanya-bhāgavata. I thought that Nityānanda Prabhu is also in charge of preaching about Mahāprabhu’s glory. So I took it that Nityānanda Prabhu must have awakened some special dedication in him in his last days which helped him to inundate with such an inconceivable magnitude, the whole of the world.

But that does not mean that he was nothing before such delegated power came in him. That del-
Negation may only come in a proper place, just as in other śaktyāveśa-avatāras, the sakti accepts a particular place and that is not an ordinary thing. One must be a proper receptacle to receive that. Śaktyāveśa. Does it mean that when the delegation comes it will enter some bad thing? This supposition is mischievous, and those that will make this mischief out of my statement regarding the delegation of Nityānanda entering him will diminish faith. They will prepare the field for becoming atheists. This is suicidal, to propagate in that line.3

And the sakhyā-rasa is also not to be neglected. Dāsa Goswāmī, who is thought to hold the highest position of mādhurya-rasa, our prayojana ācārya himself says, sakhāyam me namasta nityam. What does it mean? Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Is it an intellectual field that we can pass resolutions, pass remarks in any way we like in our fashion? No. Dāsa
Goswāmī, who is posted in the highest position of the prayojana-tattva, the acārya of prayojana in mādhurya-rasa of Rādhā dāsyam, he says that I will try to show my reverence to sakhyā. It is not a play thing. This is very rarely to be found. We must go to that plane and then we should deal with these things. Sakhyā-rasa is a very small thing? What is this? From a distance I want to show my respect to sakhyā-rasa. That should be the tendency of a real devotee, and not to disregard all these things.

In this section Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja is responding to the objection that by stating that Śrīla Prabhupāda found his ideal in sakhyā-rasa rather than mādhurya that Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja was considering Śrīla Prabhupāda a lower devotee. In his typical harmonizing spirit, Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja also tried at a later date to accommodate those who insist that Prabhupāda found his ideal in mādhurya-rasa.

Pujyapāda Śrīdhara Mahārāja did this by suggesting an alternative understanding of Prabhupāda’s obvious affinity for sakhyā-rasa: that Prabhupāda may have held an affinity for mādhurya-rasa within, and owing to his empowerment by Nityānanda Prabhu, he outwardly showed affinity for sakhyā-rasa. However, this was clearly not the personal opinion of Pujyapāda Śrīdhara Mahārāja, nor was he privy to all of the instances cited in this booklet that so strongly support his opinion. Furthermore, he made it clear that his realization that Prabhupāda found his ideal in sakhyā-rasa in no way implied that his disciples are somehow unable to attain mādhurya-rasa under Śrīla Prabhupāda’s guidance.

However, it is worth noting that interest in mañjari-bhāva on the part of Prabhupāda’s disciples has come almost entirely from sources outside of his mission. Indeed, the term mañjari-bhāva is found nowhere in any of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, conversations, or letters, and nowhere in any Vyās-pūjā offerings written by his disciples prior to śikṣā-gurus be-
coming involved with his disciples. This, of course, is not to say that the concept of manjarî-bhâva is not found throughout the Gauḍīya texts translated and commented on by Śrīla Prabhupāda, as it is central to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

It should be clear from Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja’s remarks that he carefully considered Prabhupāda’s inner life from different angles of vision over time and in consideration of śāstra. Thus we are well advised to carefully consider the weight of this judgment. In case anyone might think that Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja might be making too much of Prabhupāda’s prayer aboard the Jaladuta, that he may be taking too much liberty in suggesting that it reveals something of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s inner mood, we may note the remarks Prabhupāda himself made in his diary on the day he wrote that prayer, September 13, 1965: “Today I have disclosed my mind to my companion Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. There is a Bengali poem made by me today in this connection.” Śrīla Prabhupāda did not write this poem with publishing in mind—not
for preaching but for reflecting on the inner life that fueled his preaching.

In 2003 Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Back To Godhead magazine published an article by Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswāmī on this poem. The Goswāmī remarks therein:

Śrīla Prabhupāda rarely made entries in his diary, yet from this ocean crossing we have a number of intimate revelations of his mind. With the same straightforward, factual tone in which he has noted the date, the weather, and the state of his health, he has described his helpless dependence on his “companion” Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and his absorption in the ecstasy of separation from Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda rarely wrote poems; we have found a life’s total of no more than about half a dozen. They were not the products of idle literary hours, nor were they written for publication or fame. (The poems and diary entries were found years later by curious disciples who uncovered them among their spiritual master’s miscellaneous papers.)

The last two verses of this poem give an unexpected confidential glimpse into Śrīla Prabhupāda’s direct relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. In verse 9 he calls on Kṛṣṇa as his “dear friend” and speaks of again experiencing the joy of wandering in the cow pastures and fields of Vraja. In verse 10 he relishes how this memory of Kṛṣṇa has come to him in such a nice way, because of his great desire for serving Kṛṣṇa.
4. A closer look at Prabhupada’s prayer
It is clear from the deep spiritual insights of Pujya-pāda Śrīdhara Mahārāja above that Prabhupāda’s prayer aboard the Jaladuta is significant. In no uncertain terms, Prabhupāda longs for sakhyā-rasa in his “Prayer to the Lotus Feet of Kṛṣṇa.” Thus it will be prudent to look at it more closely and through it, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s heart and highest ideal.

Drawing from Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja’s realizations, Swāmī B. V. Tripurārī discusses Prabhupāda’s poem in more depth. Here we find not only sakhyā-rasa, but a particular kind of spiritual friendship. Swāmī writes,

Prabhupāda says, kṛṣṇa taba puṁya habe bhāi e-punya koribe jabe rādhārāṇī khusī habe dhruva ati boli tomā tāi. Here Prabhupāda negotiates with his brother-friend (bhāi) Kṛṣṇa. He gives Kṛṣṇa moral instruction, just as Subala-sakhā is said to be expert in doing in Rūpa Gosvāmī’s Rādhā-kṛṣṇa-gaṇoddeśa-dipikā.
In the bhāva of a priyanarma-sakhā, who is actively and intimately involved in Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s romantic affairs with Śrī Rādhā, Prabhupāda says, “O my dear friend Kṛṣṇa, it is certain that you will attain piety if Rādhā is pleased with you.” Here Prabhupāda says that this is as sure as the pole star (dhruva) is fixed. He tells Kṛṣṇa, “Your life revolves around her.” In this way he captures Kṛṣṇa’s attention. Having done so in the refrain of his poem, Prabhupāda then begins to bargain with his friend in the following verses.

He does so by introducing his Gurudeva into the negotiation. Externally, in his sadhaka-deha, his guru is the great preacher Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura Prabhupāda. Internally, he is Nayana-mañi mañjarī in his spiritual form, an intimate servitor in Śrī Rādhā’s group. Priyanarma-sakhās are intimately connected with a particular yūthesvārī (gopi group leader). Here Prabhupāda implies his connection with Rādhā’s group and Lalitā-sakhī, in whose service Nayana-mañi mañjarī is situated. In effect he says to Kṛṣṇa, “My Gurudeva, who represents Śrī Rādhā, has now appeared as a great preacher in Mahāprabhu’s sankirtana movement.” Prabhupāda tells Kṛṣṇa that “Nayana-mañi mañjarī has given me an order that I must fulfill. However, I cannot do it without your help. As I have pointed out earlier, it will be good for you if you please Rādhā. This is my advice to you. Therefore, if you give me the sakti to fulfill her order, she will be pleased and you will attain piety.”

In this prayer of Śrīla Prabhupāda, we find the essence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Everyone is trying to please Kṛṣṇa, but Kṛṣṇa is trying to please Rādhā. Prabhupāda was well aware of this, and by pointing it out to Kṛṣṇa so sweetly he got his attention, and thus the power to execute his Gurudeva’s order...
was bestowed in no small way and his personal request was no doubt fulfilled as well. That request in his own words is as follows: “Once we are together, brother, I will again feel the happiness of wandering all day long, grazing the cows. I pray for the day to come when we chase each other and wrestle in every one of Vrndavana’s forests.”

Having examined Srila Prabhupada’s poem in depth, we now turn to the significance of Srila Prabhupada’s family lineage.
5. Prabhupada’s family connection to the dvadasa-gopalas
In his comments concerning Śrīla Prabhupāda’s inner life, Pujyapāda B. R. Śrīdhar Mahārāja noted Prabhupāda’s family connection with the suvarṇa-vāṇik community, and Śrīla Prabhupāda himself finds the connection significant enough to mention in a purport to Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta. As Caitanya-bhāgavata (3.5.453) points out, this community and the village of Saptagrāma were especially blessed by Nityānanda Prabhu, who was steeped in sakhyā-bhāva.

The patron saint of the suvarṇa-vāṇik community is Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura, one of Nityānanda Prabhu’s principal associates, who is also one of the dvādaśa-gopālas of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma’s nitya-līlā, where he is known as Subāhu-gopa. About the temple in Saptagrāma where Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura is especially honored and where his Deity of Mahāprabhu is worshiped, Śrīla Prabhupāda comments, “Formerly, in our childhood, we visited this temple with our parents because all the members of...
the *suvarṇa-vāṇik* community enthusiastically take interest in this temple of Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura.” When Śrīla Prabhupāda returned to India for the first time after preaching in the West, he and his disciples were honored by the executive committee of Uddhāraṇa Datta’s temple and made a pilgrimage to the temple. Some years later Śrīla Prabhupāda tried to arrange for his society to take responsibility for the Deity’s service at Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura’s temple in SaptAGRāma.

The significance of Prabhupāda’s connection with the *suvarṇa-vāṇik* community should not be underestimated. Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared in this world in this community, a community of Vaiṣṇavas who in Gaura-Nityānanda *līlā* were especially blessed by Nītāicānd and led by one of Balarāma’s eternal associates, Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura. Thus Prabhupāda’s family lineage is a *sakhyā-rasa* Vaiṣṇava lineage, one that he honored throughout his life even after he entered the eternal service of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples consider him to be a *nitya-siddha* Vaiṣṇava, one who comes to this world from the *paravyoma*. Such Vaiṣṇavas are likely to appear in this world in families that in some way correspond with their inner life. We should also note that Śrīla Prabhupāda consistently referred to his father as a *śuddha* Vaiṣṇava and that his connection to the *suvarṇa-vāṇik* community was through his paternal family lineage.
6. Insights into Srila Prabhupada’s fighting spirit
Even some of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s more spirited, aggressive expressions may be attributed to, or at least perhaps better understood in the context of, an affinity for sakhyarasa. When he would get excited sometimes, discussing influential atheists and false incarnations of God, Prabhupāda would say things such as “I will kick on his face with boots.” Svāmī Tripurārī sees this as evidence of the yuddha-vīra-rasa (chivalrous, fighting spirit). He notes that Prabhupāda’s retort is similar to that of Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura, who in Caitanya-bhāgavata often compared those who claim to believe in Kṛṣṇa but not in Śrī Caitanya, or those who believe in Śrī Caitanya but not Śrī Nityānanda, to atheists or asuras. Śrī Vṛndāvana dāsa also boldly proclaims that he kicks on their heads with boots! Tripurārī Mahārāja recently wrote, “‘I kick on their heads with boots.’ This is the language of Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura in Caitanya-bhāgavata, who is in sakhyarasa. Vīra-rasa (chivalry) and sakhyarasa are complementary. This is a particular type of vīra-rasa, yuddha-vīra complimenting sakhyarasa, the confidence (viṣrambha) and fighting spirit of a cowherd. It was very characteristic of Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

On another occasion Tripurārī Mahārāja recounts responding to a letter from a devotee who was bewildered by reading of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s remarks about dropping bombs on the heads of intractable atheists:

Ultimately I said, this is how to understand such statements: it is yuddha-vīra. You are talking to him and he goes off like this; this is his bhāva. (Very animated:) “We’ll fight them, yes. We’ll fight them for Kṛṣṇa, yes! Let’s go, all of us. Then we’ll drop bombs on them!” It doesn’t mean he really wants to drop bombs on people, but you have to understand that devotees who are motivated by bhāva sometimes manifest it, while for the most part it is subdued. It looks like such a devotee is having a nor-
normal conversation, but his bhāva may manifest slightly and enter into or influence the conversation: vaiṣṇavera kriyā mudrā vijñeha nā bujhaya. Therefore it is said, it is very difficult to understand the motivation of the Vaiṣṇava, why he or she is saying or doing something. All of their words and actions have a very deep connection to the center, to their bhāva. Theirs is a world very different from the external world. When they comment on the external world, and one tries to make sense of it without understanding their bhāva, one can be confused. Don’t be confused. He’s a cowherd! For a moment he’s going into yuddha-vīra, tasting that and remembering Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes. Yes, we will drop bombs on them. In this way I was able to satisfy that devotee.
7. Sakhya-rasa in the Gaudiya sampradaya
In light of the above evidence pointing to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s identification with sakhya-rasa, it will be helpful to examine the place of sakhya-rasa in our sampradāya. Does sakhya-rasa have a place in the Gauḍīya sampradāya? What is the goal of our sampradāya? More specifically, what kind of prema is its pratyoyana? While the apex of all possible attainments is no doubt conjugal love of God and within that Rādhā dāsyam, or the service of a handmaiden of Rādhā (also commonly referred to as mañjarī-bhāva), owing to the influence of Nityānanda Prabhu, sakhya-rasa is also prominent in our sampradāya. It is true that Śrī Nityānanda’s consort Jāhnavā-devī is an incarnation of Anaṅga-mañjarī, Śrī Rādhā’s younger sister, and that after Nityācānd’s departure from the world she became the leader of the lineage of Nityānanda Prabhu that has become most prominent. However, Nityānanda Prabhu himself began the entire sampradāya with his eternal associates, the dvādaśa-gopālas. Each of these cowherd associates of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma began initiating disciples in Bengal under the guidance of Nityānanda Prabhu before any other Gauḍīya lineage began. All of them were in sakhya-rasa and their Gauḍīya lineages were filled with this sentiment.

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself takes up this issue on another level by identifying Brahmā, who after being directly initiated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa serves as the fountainhead of the Brahmā-Madhva-Gauḍīya sampradāya, as a gopa. Just before Kṛṣṇa teaches him the Bhāgavatam in four verses Brahmā says, “O my Lord, the unborn, You have shaken hands with me just as a friend does with a friend [as if equal in position]. I shall be engaged in the creation of different types of living entities, and I shall be occupied in Your service. I shall have no perturbation, but I pray that all this may not give rise to pride, as if I were the Supreme.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in his purport:
Lord Brahmā is definitely situated in the humor of friendship with the Lord…. It is clearly exhibited herein that Lord Brahmā is related to the Personality of Godhead in the transcendental humor of friendship…. Brahmāji, although eternally related with the Lord in the transcendental humor of friendship, and although entrusted with the most exalted post of creating different grades of living entities, is still conscious of his position, that he is neither the Supreme Lord nor supremely powerful.

The example of Brahmā as explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda brings to light another significant point. Not only have there been sakhyā-rasa lineages in the Gauḍīya sampradāya, but different sentiments may appear in a lineage despite the sentiment of the lineage’s founder. For centuries we do not find sakhyā-rasa in Madhva’s lineage stemming from Brahmā. However, with the appearance of Lakṣmīpati Tīrtha in
this line, who is the initiating guru of Nityānanda Prabhu, *sakhyā-rasa* appears prominently in Nitāicāṇḍ. Then in another disciple of Lākṣmipati Tīrtha, Mādhavendra Puri, we find conjugal love.

More recent evidence for differing sentiments appearing within the same lineage is found in the well-known case of Śyāmānanda Prabhu, the disciple of Hṛdaya-caitanya. Hṛdaya-caitanya was a disciple of Gauridāsa Pañḍita, who is Subala-sakhā in Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. Like his guru Gauridāsa, Hṛdaya-caitanya was also steeped in *sakhyā-rasa*, yet his disciple Dukhi Kṛṣṇadāsa, who later became famous as Śyāmānanda, tasted conjugal love.

Even more recent evidence is supplied by Ṭhākura Bhakti-vidoda. In the Ṭhākura’s *Jaiva Dharma*, Raghunātha dāsa Bābāji ascertained one disciple’s (Vijaya-kumāra) internal identity as that of a *mañjari* serving under Lalitā-devī’s direction, and another’s (Vrajanātha) as being a *sakhi* under Subala’s direction. Finally in very recent history, many of us had the pleasure of meeting and associating with Śrīla Prabhu-pāda’s Godbrother Akiñcana Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābāji, who frankly admitted to Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja and others his embrace of *sakhyā-bhāva*. Thus to say that only *mañjari-bhāva* is available in our line contradicts the facts as we know them. Objectively speaking, it is clearly the highest reach of our lineage, but as we have seen above, it is not the only type of *prema* that serves as the *prayojana* of the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*.
8. Objections
Thus far we have considered the history of some of Prabhupāda’s interactions with his disciples that have provided glimpses into his affinity for sakhyā-rasa. We have also considered the opinions of sādhus such as Śrīla B. R. Śrīdhara Deva Goswāmī and Śrīmālī B.V. Tiāpurāri, both of whom have helped us to understand the significance of Prabhupāda’s poem aboard the Jaladuta. Prabhupāda’s family lineage has also been discussed in light of its significant connection with sakhyā-rasa, and following this we have very briefly discussed the place of sakhyā-rasa in the Gauḍīya sampradāya. Now we will turn to objections to the idea that Prabhupāda is situated in sakhyā-rasa.

Exclusive mañjarī-bhāva—the highest perfection

Some devotees have asserted that if we are to think of Prabhupāda as being situated in the highest perfection, he must be absorbed in mañjarī-bhāva, for this is the highest reach of our sampradāya. One claim made by the advocates of the mādhurya-only position is that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, as one writer put it, has come only for unnatojjvala-rasa, the brightest jewel of rasānanda—mañjarī-bhāva. They contend, or at least imply, that he came to teach mādhurya-rasa exclusively. However, we don’t see evidence in the scriptures to support this contention, but rather only that mañjarī-bhāva is the apex of Śrī Caitanya’s outreach and inner experience. The Lord himself asserts in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta that he came to teach us to love Kṛṣṇa through any of the four rasas of Vraja. According to Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa thinks to himself, “I shall personally inaugurate the religion of the age, nāma-saṅkīrtana, the congregational chanting of the holy name. I shall make the world dance in ecstasy, realizing the four mellows of loving devotional service.”

In fact, although it is unnatojjvala-rasa the Lord came to taste himself, he came to teach the four bhāvas through which
the residents of Vraja please Kṛṣṇa. And while there is no dispute that Rādhā’s love is the highest pinnacle of love, we also feel impelled to assert that in one sense there is no difference among the rasas. Before Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja begins comparing the relative intensity of the devotional sentiments, he says, “Four kinds of devotees are the receptacles of the four kinds of mellows in love of God, namely servitude, friendship, parental affection, and conjugal love. Each kind of devotee feels that his sentiment is the most excellent, and thus in that mood he tastes great happiness with Lord Kṛṣṇa.”

It is not the case, then, that Śrī Caitanya came to teach mādhurya-rasa exclusively. Furthermore, while it is true that objectively speaking when we look at the four rasas of Vraja through the lens of tattva that mañjarī-bhāva exceeds the others in intimacy, the subjective reality of each and every realized devotee ultimately determines which sentiment is highest. In other words, it is through the subjective lens of bhāva that the final determination is made, and here, as Prabhu-
pāda consistently emphasized, we must be careful not to think in terms of higher and lower and thereby muddy the waters of rasānanda with the polluted stream of our mundane mind. We must also remember that the perfection of any devotee derives from his or her willingness to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa on Kṛṣṇa’s own terms.

The sense that one’s own bhāva is the highest is also implied by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī in his depiction of the conversation between Rāmānanda Rāya and Mahāprabhu. In the midst of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja’s discussion of sādhanā and his subsequent stress on gopī-bhāva and the fact that only by following the sentiment of and serving the gopīs can one fully experience all of the pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s comments are of interest. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa writes, “Without the help of the gopīs, one cannot enter into these pastimes. Only one who worships the Lord in the ecstasy of the gopīs, following in their footsteps, can engage in the service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the bushes of Vṛndāvana. Only then can one understand the conjugal love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. There is no other procedure for understanding.”

While acknowledging that only gopī-bhāva affords one full access to Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s romantic life, Śrīla Prabhupāda begins his purport on this verse thus: “The means for returning home, for going back to Godhead, is devotional service, but everyone has a different taste in the Lord’s service. One may be inclined to serve the Lord in servitude (dāśya-rasa), fraternity (sakhyā-rasa) or parental love (vātsalya-rasa)…”

Indeed, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī himself later in this section of Caitanya-caritāmṛta pauses in his own personal enthusiasm for gopī-bhāva to remind us that the teaching is that the rāga-mārga in general consists of worshiping Vrajendranandana and that such worship consists of a number of bhāvas. And, again, whichever bhāva one embraces in the service of the son of Nanda one attains perfection in that bhāva as a resident of Vraja (Cc. 2.4.221–222).
The unique position of the priyanarma-sakhās is also important to note. As mentioned earlier, this particular group of Kṛṣṇa’s friends also serves the gopīs. Indeed, in his Ujjvalanilamāṇi Rūpa Goswāmi has referred to their bhāva as sakhī-bhāva. This is not to say that the priyanarma-sakhās’ experience is the same bhāva in all respects as that of Śrī Rādhā’s mañjarīs, but they do experience a degree of mahābhāva and thus their penetration into Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa līlā exceeds that of dāsyā and vātsalya-rasa, as well as that of other forms of sakhyā-rasa.

Thus Śrīla Prabhupāda’s affinity for sakhyā-rasa documented above should never be construed as a defect and one should not think that because of it he is less than perfect. Such thinking is mundane and offensive.

Rūpānuga

Another objection we hear is that our sampradāya is the rūpānuga line; we follow Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī, who, as we
know, is Rūpa-mañjarī in his *siddha-deha*. Thus everyone who is a *rūpānuga* must pursue *mañjarī-bhāva*. Those who take this position remind us that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s *pranām-mantra* celebrates him as very averse to anything different from Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī’s mood: *rūpānuga-viruddhāpa-siddhānta-dhvānta-hārīne*. But if we take a close look at that mantra, we see that it says that Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would not tolerate any statement contrary to Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī’s teachings/*siddhānta* (*viruddhāpa-siddhānta*). It does not say that he never tolerated any mood different from Rūpa Goswāmī’s. *Tattva* (*siddhānta*) and *bhāva* (one’s spiritual sentiment) are two different things. In *siddhānta* all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas are one, but their spiritual sentiments, or *bhāvas*, may differ.

Some may argue that *rūpānuga* in its narrowest sense means to follow Rūpa Goswāmī in all respects, including adopting *mañjarī-bhāva*. However, all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas follow Rūpa Goswāmī’s teaching, his *siddhānta*. Everyone follows *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. How could Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, as a *rūpānuga*, decry other *bhāvas* of Vraja? Vraja is that place where, according to Śrīla Jīva Goswāmī in his introduction to *Gopāla-campū*, everything is accommodated, everything harmonized. The variety of *bhāvas* among devotees is not a fault; it is an ornament. This is what we find when we read Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī’s teachings, beginning with *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. So in that perhaps broader sense, all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas are *rūpānugas*. This undermines the claim we sometimes encounter that *sakhyā-rasa* devotees may be *rāgānuga bhaktas* but not *rūpānuga bhaktas*. Instead of following Rūpa Goswāmī, or Rūpa-mañjarī, we are told, those devotees follow Gauridāsa Paṇḍita, who they say is a *rāgānuga ācārya* but not a *rūpānuga ācārya*. Such narrow thinking may be accepted in some circles. However, as we see above, Gauridāsa Paṇḍita’s followers certainly do follow the teachings, the *siddhānta*, of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī, which makes them *rūpānuga* devotees in the broader sense.
Still another objection we hear is that the mantras devotees in our line receive, particularly the Gopāla mantra and the Kāma-gāyatrī mantra, bestow love in śṛṅgāra-rasa. The Gopāla mantra, we hear, means, “I accept the same relation with Kṛṣṇa as the gopī: that Kṛṣṇa is my beloved.” It is, they say, a gopī-mantra, for gopī-bhāva-āśraya only. What they seem to be missing is Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī’s Bhāgavatamṛta, another seminal work in our sampradāya. That epic work follows Gopa-kumāra, a cowherd from Govardhana, in his sojourn through the material and spiritual universes all the way to Kṛṣṇa’s personal company in Goloka. What is the vehicle that carries Gopa-kumāra to Goloka Vṛndāvana? As far as his dikṣā-mantra is concerned, it is the Gopāla mantra.

Moreover, it is important to note here that the mantra Gopa-kumāra chanted is not the eighteen-syllable mantra...
we are given at dikṣā. That mantra contains three names for Kṛṣṇa: Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, and Gopī-jana-vallabha. In his commentary on pūrva 15 of Gopāla-tāpani Upaniṣad, Śwāmī B. V. Tripurārī, following our predecessor ācāryas Jīva Goswāmī, Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, and others, points out the specific significance of each of the names included in this mantra. The name Kṛṣṇa, he explains, corresponds most closely with love for Kṛṣṇa as experienced by practitioners of vaidhī-bhakti, love tinged with reverence for Kṛṣṇa, as in Dvārakā. The name Govinda corresponds most closely with the love of those practicing rāgānuga-bhakti, aspiring for the kind of love of Govinda’s cowherd-boy friends, as well as those following the vātsalya-rasa exemplified by Nanda and Yaśodā. Gopī-jana-vallabha, however, is especially for culturing unnatojjvala-rasa, conjugal love for Kṛṣṇa following in the wake of Śrīmatī Rādhā-kī’s cowherd-girl friends. In this connection, Tripurārī Mahārāja writes,

Those who aspire for this spiritual sentiment [conjugal love] in Kṛṣṇa’s Vraja līlā understand the names Kṛṣṇa and Govinda to be aspects of Gopī-jana-vallabha. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu himself chanted the ten-syllable Gopāla mantra, kliṁ gopī- jana-vallabhāya-svābā, rather than the full eighteen-syllable Gopāla mantra given here in Gopāla-tāpani. Thus it is to be understood that the names Kṛṣṇa and Govinda are not absolutely necessary for those who aspire for the conjugal love of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.13

Sanātana Goswāmī tells us in Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta that the mantra that carried Gopa-kumāra all the way to Goloka Vṛndāvana, ultimately revealing his eternal form as Kṛṣṇa’s cowherd-boy friend Sarūpa, is this same ten-syllable Gopāla mantra especially meant for those aspiring to mādhurya-rasa.14 This seems to indicate, then, that even this mantra may give varieties of love other than conjugal love. More-
over, to bring us back to earth, so to speak, the mantra our gurus give us is the eighteen-syllable Gopāla mantra, which accommodates a broader spectrum of spiritual sentiments.

Reading Brhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta should, it seems, raise a couple of questions in thoughtful readers’ minds, particularly those convinced that our sampradāya offers only mādhurya-rasa. One is, “Why doesn’t Sanātana Goswāmī, who is, as we know, Lavaṅga-maṅjarī, have his protagonist discover his maṅjarī identity, rather than that of the cowherd boy Sarūpa?” And the other question is, “If the Gopāla mantra is for gopī-bhāva-āśraya only, how is it that it revealed a cowherd boy’s bhāva to Gopa-kumāra?” Sanātana Goswāmī himself seems unwilling to accept such a proposition.

Gurus and disciples with different sentiments
Yet another assertion made by the advocates of exclusive mādhurya-bhāva is that a disciple cannot have a different bhāva than his or her guru. They say they cannot think of a
single instance where a disciple has a svarūpa different from the guru he or she follows. While it is true that in most cases the disciple follows the guru in terms of his or her bhāva, this is not always the case. In the least, there are exceptions to this standard, exceptions that do not make for disciples who have somehow fallen short.

The fact that disciples do indeed sometimes develop different bhāvas from that of their guru has been demonstrated above in my brief explanation of the place of sakhyā-rasa in our sampradāya. Therein, evidence of different sentiments appearing in the same lineage was presented. Perhaps the most significant evidence in that section contrary to the notion that the disciple must attain the same sentiment as that of his or her guru is the reference to Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda’s Jaiva Dharma. As mentioned, in Jaiva Dharma two disciples of the same guru develop affinity for two different bhāvas: sakhyā and mādhurya. I stress the example found in Jaiva Dharma, among other reasons, because different explanations of the examples of Akiñcana Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī and Śyāmānanda Prabhu, also mentioned above, have been suggested at times.

The case of Śyāmānanda Prabhu is often considered an exception to the norm. As the story goes, one of Rādhā’s handmaidens claimed him for her camp despite his initiation in a lineage of sakhyā-rasa gurus. In this instance an entire spiritual drama unfolded involving various eternal participants in Kṛṣṇa līlā participating in both their siddha and sādhaka-dehas. The instance is so unique that it has been celebrated and written about for generations. Moreover, it spawned a new sampradāya, the Śyāmānanda Parivāra. Nothing like this happened in the case of Śrīla Prabhupāda. At the same time, the līlā of Śyāmānanda cannot be entirely dismissed by any means. In spite of its uniqueness, it nonetheless also speaks to us of the possibility of exceptions to the norm.

In the case of Akiñcana Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī, some have argued that his failure to preach as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī
Thakura desired constituted an offense on his part that caused his bhava to be downgraded. Bhakti-rasamiṣṭa-sindhu 1.3.54 is sometimes cited as support for this interpretation. Sri Jiva comments that a slight offense to a great devotee or to Sri Krsna himself can result in one’s bhava being downgraded. However, this verse refers to devotees who have already attained bhava. In the case of Akincana Krsnadasa Babaji, there is absolutely no evidence that he attained gopi-bhava from which his bhava was downgraded to sakhyabhava. From beginning to end his affinity and ultimate attainment was sakhya-bhava.

But let me return again to the writing of Bhaktivinoda Thakura in his Jaiva Dharma to further demonstrate why this evidence is particularly compelling. Those who might object that this book is a work of fiction should be advised that Srila Srivhara Maharaja stated in no uncertain terms that, because the Thakura is a siddha-mahatma, whatever manifests in his mind is reality on some plane or at some time. More-
over, real or fictitious, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura used that book to present the Gaḍḍiya Vaishṇava philosophy from A to Z. In his line, this book represents the siddhānta. It is thus very significant that he has given an example of two disciples of the same guru developing different bhāvas with the full blessing of their guru. Indeed, the two disciples are the principal characters of this section of the book! Their affinity for differing bhāvas is presented as quite natural and hardly an exception to the so-called rule that a disciple can only attain the bhāva of his or her guru.

The songs Prabhupāda taught us

Some devotees have objected that a few of the songs Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us to sing in daily worship indicate an affinity for mādhurya-rasa. One example is the Tulasī kīrtana he gave us, which says, ei nivedana dhara, sakhib anugata koro/ sevā-adbhikāra diye koro nīja dāsā: “I beg you to make me a follower of the cowherd damsels of Vraja. Please give me the privilege of devotional service and make me your own maidservant.” This clearly expresses an aspiration for mādhurya-rati. Another example is Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakrasvarṭi Ṭhākura’s Gurvaṁkam. The fifth verse says, śrī rādhikā mādhavayor apāra-mādhurya-līlā guṇa-rūpa-nāmān: “The spiritual master is always eager to hear and chant about the unlimited conjugal pastimes of Rādhikā and Mādhava, and their qualities, names, and forms.” And the sixth verse says, nikuñja-yuno rati-keli-siddhyai yā yālibhīr yuktir apekṣaṇīyā/ tatrāti-dākṣyād ati-vallabhasya: “The spiritual master is very dear, because he is expert in assisting the gopīs, who at different times make different tasteful arrangements for the perfection of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s conjugal loving affairs within the groves of Vṛndāvana.”

When considering such songs, however, we would do well to keep a couple of things in mind. One is that these are standard songs. Furthermore, the sakhib-bhāva referred to in the prayer to Vṛndā-devī could also be sung in light of
one’s cultivation of the mādhurya aspect of the priyānarmasakhā’s “sakhī-bhāva,” although in my mind it is doubtful that Prabhupāda had anything so specific in mind when he gave us this popular song.

With regard to Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s Gurvasṭakam, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained how he himself thought of these verses on at least three occasions. As Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Jayapatākā Mahārāja in 1969 regarding the Mahārāja’s question about Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s sixth verse: “The prayers offered by Viśvanātha Cakravartī to his Spiritual Master have a special significance. His Spiritual Master was one of the assistant gopīs, so the prayer was offered like that. On the whole, the Spiritual Master is an agent of Kṛṣṇa. But either He is assistant to the gopīs or assistant to the cowherds boys, He is on the level of Kṛṣṇa. That is the verdict of all scriptures.”

Here we find an instance in which Prabhupāda’s disciple directly asks him about the significance of Viśvanātha Cakra-
vartī’s verse that describes the guru in terms of gopī-bhāva. Had Prabhupāda been absorbed in gopī-bhāva, we would expect a different answer than that which he has given above. Instead, Prabhupāda widens the possibilities to include sakhyā-rasa by explaining the verse more broadly, more broadly than Śrī Viśvanātha himself intended, as Prabhupāda has explained.

Explaining the sixth verse in a lecture that was later included in Journey of Self-Discovery, he said,

The spiritual master’s ultimate goal is that he wants to be transferred to the planet of Kṛṣṇa, where he can associate with the gopīs to help them serve Kṛṣṇa. Some spiritual masters are thinking of becoming assistants to the gopīs, some are thinking of becoming assistants to the cowherd boys, some are thinking of becoming assistants to Nanda and Mother Yaśodā, and some are thinking of becoming God’s servants.¹⁵

In 1973 Śrīla Prabhupāda discussed the symptoms of the guru as presented in Gurvaṭṭakam at the University of Stockholm. There he said of the fifth verse of Gurvaṭṭakam, “The spiritual master is always thinking of the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa . . . with His consort Śrimati Rādhārāṇī and the gopīs. Sometimes he is thinking about Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes with the cowherd boys. This means that he is always thinking of Kṛṣṇa engaged in some kind of pastime.” Thus each time Prabhupāda is on record explaining the significance of the two verses of Śrī Viśvanātha’s Gurvaṭṭakam that speak directly of gopī-bhāva, he speaks of sakhyā-bhāva as an alternative. The obvious explanation for this is that he himself is “thinking about Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes with the cowherd boys.”

Note that as pointed out earlier some cowherds also worship Rādhā-Mādhava and assist them in their union, the priyanarma-sakhās. Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī says that the priyanarma-sakhās possess a very special bhāva and engage in the most confidential pastimes.¹⁶ In his comments on this
verse, Śrīla Jīva Goswāmī writes that the special bhāva referred to involves the desire to give pleasure to Kṛṣṇa by helping his girlfriends. A few verses later, describing the anubhāvas that distinguish the priyanarma-sakhās from Kṛṣṇa’s other friends, Śrī Rūpa says,

Carrying messages among the young women of Vraja, encouraging the gopīs’ love for Kṛṣṇa, taking Kṛṣṇa’s side when the gopīs are present and Kṛṣṇa is not present, showing skill at siding with the chief gopīs when Kṛṣṇa is present and they are not, and arguing intensely by whispering in each other’s ears are the activities of the priyanarma-sakhās. 17

The second chapter of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī’s Ujjvalanilamāni says of the priyanarma-sakhās: atyantika-rabasya-jñāḥ, they know the most intimate details of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, and sakhī-bhāva-samāśritaḥ, they have taken shelter of
the mood of Rādhikā’s sakhīs. In his commentary on this verse, Śrīla Jīva Goswāmī says, “When out of affection for both Kṛṣṇa and his beloved gopīs they desire to unite them both, their masculine nature is subdued.”

The mood of this particular group of Kṛṣṇa’s friends, then, has an intimate connection with Kṛṣṇa’s loving affairs with the damsels of Vraja. Indeed, they are influenced by both Kṛṣṇa’s friends and the leaders of Rādhā’s groups of girl friends. Their bhāva is a mixture of sakhyā and mādhuryā. If Śrīla Prabhupāda is affiliated with this group of gopas, it would seem that he could certainly aspire to “become a follower of the cowherd damsels of Vraja,” as well as be “expert in assisting the gopīs, who at different times make different tasteful arrangements for the perfection of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s conjugal loving affairs within the groves of Vṛndāvana,” and still love Kṛṣṇa in sakhyā-rasa. Furthermore, considering the possibility that Śrīla Prabhupāda is a follower of the priyanāma-sakhā is a way of harmonizing a sakhyā-rasa sthāyi-bhāva with any perception of mādhuryā in his character.
9. Conclusion
As we have seen, there is considerable evidence, including personal statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda himself, that the ideal of His Divine Grace is sākhyā-rasa. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda usually, as is customary among Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, kept his internal life to himself, it is not something that one can hide altogether, at least not to the philosophically trained eye, much less the awakened heart. That which can be seen through the eye of śāstra-yukti in relation to the available evidence is not something to dismiss altogether, even when lack of personal realization remains. While my heart is less than fully awakened in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it should be clear that those whose realization is deep will need to reach a conclusion concerning Prabhupāda’s svarūpa that either corresponds with the external evidence or, if it contradicts this evidence, provides us with compelling spiritual reasoning as to why such evidence should be disregarded. In the case of Pujiyapāda B. R. Śrīdhara Deva Goswāmī, we have a realized soul who lived with Prabhupāda for six years and was his lifelong friend and Godbrother, a Godbrother whom on occasion Prabhupāda referred to affectionately as his śīkṣā-guru, and a śīkṣā-guru that Prabhupāda authorized his disciples to take shelter of should the need arise. Thus the fact that his personal realization corresponds with all of the available evidence makes it difficult in the least to reach any other conclusion.

Swāmī B.V. Tripurāri relates that when he read Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Jaladuta prayer to Prabhupāda’s Godbrother Pujiyapāda Bhakti Promode Purī Mahārāja, Purī Mahārāja immediately exclaimed, “Sākhyā-rasa!” Then when Tripurāri Mahārāja said that some devotees assert that it is a problem if Śrīla Prabhupāda is in sākhyā-rasa because our sampradāya is principally a gopī-bhāva lineage, Purī Mahārāja replied, “Bābā, if your guru is situated in sākhyā-rasa, you don’t have a problem. But if anyone thinks they have a problem because
their guru is in *sakhyä-rasa* rather than *mädhuryä-rasa*, then they have a problem!” Śrīla Purī Mahārāja then went on to explain that should any of Prabhupāda’s disciples develop greed for *gopī-bhāva* that Prabhupāda would make arrangements to facilitate their pursuit.

We have seen that after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s passing some of his disciples have developed a keen interest in *mañjarī-bhāva*. However, in each instance that I’m aware of this interest has been facilitated by a *śikṣā-guru* from outside of Prabhupāda’s International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness (which is not to say that I am implying that this is the necessary course that all disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda with interest in *mañjarī-bhāva* must take). At the same time, we find that there are a number of Prabhupāda’s disciples who are following in the wake of his own interest in *sakhyä-rasa*. The majority of his disciples, on the other hand, might respond that they have not contemplated these issues in any detail, nor have they begun to search them out in their own hearts.
My hope is that this booklet will be helpful to them, as well as to those who consider themselves well thought out on the matter. My intent here is to set the historical record straight with regard to the available evidence and supporting realizations from sādhus, and to make clear that despite Prabhupāda’s obvious affinity for sakhyā-rasa, he remains fully competent to guide those disciples of his that develop spiritual greed for gopī-bhāva, even while such may include arranging a śikṣā-guru to assist them. After all, in the final analysis, guru is one. Let us serve him, following our own hearts and avoiding offenses—sins of the soul—at all costs.

Śrīla Prabhupāda left this world in Vṛndāvana, from where he initially reached out to us. He left the world while absorbed in translating and commenting on the Bhāgavatam’s brahmā-vimohana-līlā. In this līlā Śrī Kṛṣṇa planned a picnic lunch, a well-known painting of which Śrīla Prabhupāda was so fond of. It is here—in this līlā, longing to go to Govardhana—that Prabhupāda’s ṇṛhat mṛdaṅga was silenced, not
by any external influence, but by the blessing of Śrī Kṛṣṇa inviting him to lunch.

_Bhāva_ is characterized by longing, longing well deserved, arising as it does out of _śraddhā_ and _śaraṇāgati_. We see this kind of _bhāva_ in Śrīla Prabhupāda, whose surrender was not partial but wholesale. Glimpsing by his mercy alone the direction of his spiritual destination, may we all be humbled to fall flat in _śaraṇāgati_ at his lotus feet. May we be showered by Śrīla Prabhupāda’s infinite mercy, and may we one day be called to share some of Kṛṣṇa’s _lāḍū_ and _kacaurīs_ with him.
Endnotes


2 Swāmī B. V. Tripūrārī has also mentioned three separate instances in which gurus from other Gauḍīya lineages than those of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvāti Ṭhākura have told their disciples that Bhaktivедanta Swami Prabhupāda was empowered by Nityānanda Prabhu. This is significant in that Pujyapāda Śrīdhar Mahārāja is not alone in his conviction. Indeed, leaders of other sects have independently reached the same conclusion, a conclusion that in Śrīdhar Mahārāja’s mind also supports his insight as to Prabhupāda’s ideal of sakhyā-rasa.

3 In this section and the following one, Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāja is alluding to objections to his glorification of Śrīla Prabhupāda that were raised by some of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s neophyte disciples. Herein the objection is to Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāja’s glorification of Śrīla Prabhupāda as a śaktyāvesa empowered by Nityānanda Prabhu. The objection is based on the misunderstanding that by saying that at a certain point in his life Śrīla Prabhupāda was empowered, Śrīla Śrīdhar Mahārāja implied that Śrīla Prabhupāda was not himself an extraordinary devotee, but rather that he was so only on the basis of his empowerment.

4 I do not mean to say that interest in mādhurya-rasa is foreign to ISKCON devotees. Far from it, Prabhupāda has made it abundantly clear that objectively speaking this is the highest reach of Śrī Caitanya’s mission. Thus there may be any number of devotees in ISKCON who in a general sense are interested in this ideal, aside from any outside influence. However, specific interest in mañjarī-bhāva and detailed information concerning this ideal has been generated from outside sources.
In some instances, ISKCON gurus who have been so influenced have concealed their sources while remaining in the mission and even denied or rejected them only to propagate what they learned from them in their own names or in the name of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Interest in mañjarī-bhāva has come not only from gurus in the line of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Both before and after the departure of Śrīla Prabhupāda, gurus from other lineages also have interested ISKCON devotees in mañjarī-bhāva. However, in these instances the influence has included approaches to sādhana not embraced by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and his followers.

Note that Swāmī’s translation of this opening line of Prabhupāda’s prayer differs from that published by the BBT, which in the least misses the underlying spirit of the poem. It represents B. R. Śrīdhar Deva Goswāmī’s understanding of the Bengali verse.


7 Ibid, purport.


11 This verse has been interpreted by some devotees to mean that because the four rasas of Vraja are included within mādhurya, Śrī Caitanya has come to distribute this rasa alone. Such devotees have also conjectured that
there is no *sādhana* in the Gauḍīya *sampradāya* aimed at attaining any other *rasa*. However, these notions are not supported by the evidence at hand. Among other things, the *sākhyā* lineages inspired by Nityānanda Prabhu stand in contradiction to them.


16 Rūpa Goswāmī, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 3.3.43.

17 Ibid, 3.3.93–94.

Glossary

**Anubhāva** Deliberate actions that correspond with one’s dominant spiritual emotion.

**Bhāva** Spiritual ecstasy.

**Brahmā-vimohana-līlā** *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.12–14: Kṛṣṇa bewilders Brahmā.

**Gauravānī-pracārīṇe** Propagation of the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

**Gopī-bhāva-āśraya** The shelter of the spiritual sentiment of the gopīs.

**Mahābhāva** Great ecstasy, the highest point to which prema-bhakti can rise.

**Mañjarī-bhāva** The sentiment of the maidservants of Śrī Rādhā.

**Nitya-siddha** An eternally perfected devotee.

**Paravyoma** The spiritual realm, beyond heaven.

**Rāga-mārga** The path of spontaneous love of Kṛṣṇa.

**Rasānanda** The transcendental joy of tasting aesthetic rapture in love of God.

**Sādhaka-deha** External, spiritualized body of the practitioner.

**Śāstra-yukti** Reasoning employed to support the conclusions of scriptural revelation.

**Siddha-deha** One’s perfected, internal spiritual body.

**Siddha-mahātmā** A great, perfected soul.

**Śrīṅgāra-rasa** Conjugal love of God.

**Sthāyi-bhāva** The dominant spiritual sentiment in which one serves Kṛṣṇa.

**Suvarṇa-vaṇik** A gold merchant community in Bengal that was especially blessed by Nityānanda Prabhu. Prabhupāda was born in this community.

**Svarūpa** One’s spiritual form or nature.

**Svarūpa-siddhi** The perfection of identifying with one’s spiritual form.

**Tridanḍī-bhikṣu** A Vaiṣṇava renunciate (beggar).
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