

# ŚRĪ GURU-PARAMPARĀ

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Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura,  
Heir to the Esoteric Life of Kedarnātha Bhaktivinoda

Swāmī B.V. Tripurāri

HARMONIST PUBLISHERS

60 WASHINGTON PARK AVE  
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## Introduction

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Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in the West is indebted to Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura both for its practice and the considerable interest it has awakened in academia. The Ṭhākura has been dubbed the “Pioneer of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in the West.” If this epithet is justifiable, it is for the theoretical underpinnings, the inspiration and the orientation he gave to the religious movement founded by Śrī Caitanya, which made it possible for it to reach out to the rest of the world. Those who followed him in his missionary zeal dedicated themselves to his dream, a dream in which he envisioned people from all nations embracing one another in the name of Śrī Caitanya, flooding the world with Vraja *bhakti*. After his departure from this world, these dedicated souls formed missions that enjoyed considerable success ministering to Western civilization. The father of such missions was Bhaktivinoda’s son, Bimalā Prasāda, later known as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Bhaktisiddhānta saw Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura as an eternally liberated associate of Śrī Caitanya, the Seventh Goswāmī. He conceived of himself as Bhaktivinoda-*parivāra*, or heir to Bhaktivinoda’s teachings, and taught his followers to also identify themselves as such.

The conviction that Bhaktisiddhānta inherited the legacy of a worldwide preaching mission from his father is not a point of contention.<sup>1</sup> However, since Bhaktisiddhānta’s own mission, the Gauḍīya Māṭha, and ISKCON, its more well-known offspring

in the West, have placed such a priority on evangelism, a number of scholars and practitioners have been led to believe that these movements lack the internal spiritual culture which is identified with the religion of the Gosvāmīs and, indeed, that of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Some have pointed to the tradition maintained by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s youngest son, Lalitā Prasāda Ṭhākura, as being more true to his father’s inner life. Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura would no doubt have been the first to disagree with this assessment. In his estimation it was not possible to separate Bhaktivinoda’s outreach from the depths of his inner realization.

In some respects, Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura’s preaching went against the current of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism’s existing orthodoxy. When he began his mission under the direction of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, he was one soul standing up against what he considered to be an enormous edifice of religious misconception. His mission, as he envisioned it, involved declaring an all-out “war against *māyā*.” His critique of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava spiritual heritage focused primarily on its approach to the esoteric practice of *rāgānuṣṅgā sādhana*, practices which Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura himself engaged in and wrote about, but which Bhaktisiddhānta did not incorporate into his own mission. His protest was expressed in a novel approach to the concept of disciple succession.

The basis of all criticism levied at Bhaktisiddhānta and his *goṣṭhī* by other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sects, the Rādhā-kuṇḍa bābājīs

as well as the followers of Lalitā Prasāda Ṭhākura, is that when Bhaktisiddhānta rejected Bhaktivinoda’s initiating guru, Bipin Bihari Goswāmī (which indeed did not appear to sit well with Bhaktivinoda), he also rejected the tradition’s stress on the *dikṣā-guru-paramparā*. Indeed, Bhaktisiddhānta did not teach his followers to worship the *dikṣā* guru of Gaura Kīṣora Dāsa Bābājī, who from a *dikṣā* perspective was his *parama-guru*. Bābājī’s of Rādhā-kuṇḍa thus fault him for Vaiṣṇava *aṅgādhā*, as did Lalitā Prasāda for this and his rejection of Bipin Bihari Goswāmī.

All opposition to Bhaktisiddhānta contends that he did not receive *siddha-praṇālī* initiation to the esoteric worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa from either Bhaktivinoda or Gaura Kīṣora. Some critics go so far as to question whether he was initiated at all.<sup>2</sup> Such criticism was given considerable credibility when two of the Ṭhākura’s foremost learned disciples, Ananta Vāsudeva and Sundarānanda Vidyāvinoda, defected from his lineage and wrote books criticizing a number of his policies several years after he left the world. In doing so, however, they never mentioned his name, perhaps considering that his mission, though inherently flawed, was of noble intent and thus wished to avoid any personal criticism of him. Subsequently, other learned devotees with knowledge of Bengali and Sanskrit and an apparent interest if not eagerness to attain Vraja *bhakti*, have followed them in their desire to tread the path of *rāgānuga sādhana*. Such devotees have rejected their *dikṣā* from the line of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and have received *siddha-praṇālī dikṣā* from other lineages.

On the other hand, Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura is accepted as a *siddha-mahātmā* by even the followers of Carāṇa dāsā Bābājī and others, whose practices he called into question. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura entrusted him with his preaching mission and the charge of the Śrī Caitanya *janma-sthāna*. From being a lone soul standing up to critique his own tradition, he amassed a sizable following in India, where he established sixty-four Māṭhas, and his disciples brought Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism to every town and village the world over. It is hard to imagine that such a person was at the same time an offender to saintly persons (Vaiṣṇava *aparādhi*), not properly initiated, or in any way lacking in terms of providing a venue for his followers to attain Vraja *bhakti*.

It may be worth pointing out that many followers of Śrī Caitanya left the so-called orthodoxy of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism to join Bhaktisiddhānta, while only a handful left his fold. Amongst those who did, fewer still continued the practices of *rāgānuṅga sādhana*, and the majority of them gave up any kind of *sādhana*. On the other hand, there are a number of success stories amongst the followers of Bhaktisiddhānta in terms of their ability to preach and propagate, an ability that is arguably an indicator of inner attainment. Indeed, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī informs that without *kṛṣṇa śakti*,<sup>3</sup> no one can successfully propagate Śrī Caitanya's religion.<sup>4</sup>

In this article, I wish to examine the sensitive issue of Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura's critique of prevalent practices in the *sampradāya* and his analysis of the modalities of

*rāgānuga sādhana*. I intend to investigate a number of questions: What was Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s criticism of *siddha-praṇālī dikṣā*? Why did he not institute it in his mission? Is it possible for his followers to attain Vraja *bhakti* without this initiation? And what is the *guru paramparā* of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura? While he may have criticized others justly, did he throw the baby out with the bath water when he abandoned the *siddha-praṇālī dikṣā*?

I offer this article as food for thought and with openness to information that I may not be aware of that might alter its conclusions, as the history of events surrounding the Ṭhākura’s preaching and interaction with dominant members of mainstream Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism of the time has not been objectively documented to the satisfaction of all parties. I write in the spirit of serving my *guru-praṇālī*, the lineage of spiritual preceptors that have most influenced my spiritual life, and not with a view to criticize unduly any particular individual. I write as well with a view to bring to the attention of scholars that which the followers of Bhaktisiddhānta understand to be their connection to *rāgānuga-sādhana*, and to address the present-day followers of Bhaktisiddhānta, and ISKCON in particular, in terms of what he expected of them. In doing so, I focus on the two aspects of the Gauḍīya tradition that Bhaktisiddhānta sought to adjust: its *guru paramparā* and *siddha-praṇālī-dikṣā*.

## I. Siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā and the eligibility for rāgānugā bhakti

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Though initiation is offered in what has been called the Gauḍīya-Saraswata *sampradāya*, i.e., the Gauḍīya school which follows Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī, it does not follow the *siddha-praṇālī* system as was practiced by Bhaktisiddhānta's contemporaries and which continues to be followed in many Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sects today. In the *siddha-praṇālī* system, which adds the assignation of a spiritual identity as an integral element of the initiation process, particular emphasis is placed on an unbroken *dīkṣā-guru-paramparā* reaching back to one of the associates of Śrī Caitanya. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura radically revised the concept of initiation by not only severing with the tradition in its stress on an unbroken *dīkṣā-paramparā*, but by de-emphasizing the type of devotional practices which grow out of the *siddha-praṇālī* tradition. However, it should be noted that in doing so he nonetheless conceived of his own spiritual identity as a handmaiden of Rādhā (Nayanamaṇi Mañjarī), a realization that appears to have been awakened through divine grace and the kind of spiritual practice he advocated.<sup>5</sup>

Outside Bhaktisiddhānta's line, *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā* is common. It represents initiation into *rāgānugā sādhana-bhakti*. In *rāgānugā sādhana*, practitioners cultivate a particular *bhāva* of Kṛṣṇa's eternal Vraja, externally in their practitioner identity (*sādhaka-deha*) as well as internally in their eternal identity (*siddha-*

*deha*).<sup>6</sup> Thus for its practice, knowledge of one's eternal identity is ultimately required. *Siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā* involves the guru's explaining the eleven elemental constituents (*ekādaśa bhāva*) of the disciple's eternal identity. It also involves discussion of the eternal identities of the gurus in the *praṇāli* (lineage) that form one's particular *dikṣā paramparā*. After this initiation, the disciple is taught the practice of *līlā-smaraṇam* from the perspective of his own spiritual identity, a practice that when mature enables the disciple to enter the *līlā* of Rādhā Kṛṣṇa.

It appears that Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura himself not only accepted the authenticity of this tradition, but received it from his *dikṣā* guru, Bipin Bihari Gosvāmī. A *dikṣā patra*, or certificate that often accompanies this initiation, is available in the historical record.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Bhaktivinoda writes in *Jaiva-dharma* that the *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā* was brought to this world by Śrī Caitanya himself.<sup>8</sup> He states there that this esoteric system was given to Vakreśvara Paṇḍita, who in turn gave it to Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī. Gopāla Guru gave it to Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī. Gopāla Guru and Dhyānacandra were the first to explicitly describe this type of *dikṣā* and the *sādhana* that accompanies it.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, there is no evidence that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura received this *siddha-praṇāli* himself from his own guru, Gaura Kīśora dāsa bābājī, or from his father, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

An important question amongst even those who participate in the *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā* tradition is that of eligibility or

*adhikāra*. In general terms, it is said that eagerness to pursue such a spiritual identity in Vraja, or *lobha* (greed), is the minimum requirement.<sup>10</sup> What constitutes the threshold of such eagerness, however, does not meet with universal consensus in the Gauḍīya school. While some interpret greed generously, others have a more conservative understanding. Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī was conservative in this regard, and as we shall see he can point to Jīva Goswāmī, the foremost philosopher of the tradition, in support of his position. “First *marāṇam* (ego death) then *smaraṇam*” might characterize his understanding. In this, Saraswatī Ṭhākura is hardly alone. Many outside of his lineage agree heartily with him on this point. Indeed, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Goswāmī’s 17th century *Sādhāna-dīpikā* cites renunciation of household life as a prerequisite for entering the mysteries of *māñjarī-bhāva*.

On the other hand, those who have too liberal of an understanding of eligibility fit into a generic group that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura termed *sahajīyās*, based on its etymology from the word *sahaja*, “easy.” Though to his understanding such people took the esoteric practices too cheaply, a distinction should be drawn between these Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and those whom he named Prākṛta-sahajīyās, whose doctrines and practice differ considerably from those of Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy, particularly in what the latter consider to be their immoral conduct.<sup>11</sup>

There is perhaps reason to trust Bhaktisiddhānta’s perception of immorality in the group of *bābājīs* at Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Stressing the liberal statements of Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura intended to glorify the efficacy of *bhakti* over that of *jñāna-mārga*, still today many bābājīs from Rādhā-kuṇḍa and other areas of Vraja maintain that the only sin a Vaiṣṇava can commit is to offend a Vaiṣṇava (Vaiṣṇava *aparādha*), thus lending to a liberal attitude with regard to immoral conduct. Indeed, both Bhaktivinoda and Bhaktisiddhānta considered that premature contemplation of the erotic pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa lead inevitably to such moral lapses.

Those who are not yet perfected but are engaged in the esoteric practices of *rāgānuṅgā bhakti* following *siddha-praṇālī* initiation consider themselves to be practicing *ajāta-rati rāgānuṅgā sādhana*, a term first appearing in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.<sup>12</sup> *Ajāta-rati* refers to those who have not yet attained *bhāva (rati) bhakti*. In the dominant practice of *siddha-praṇālī-dikṣā* today, *ajāta-rati rāgānuṅgā sādhakas* are those who have not realized their *siddha-deha*, but have been told about it and are expected to engage in the practice of *līlā-smaraṇam* in conjunction with chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā mantra* in *japa* sixty-four rounds daily. Such devotees are also expected to follow the majority of Rūpa Goswāmī's sixty-four limbs of regulative devotion (*vaidhī bhakti*) in order to give support to their practice. It is commonplace for these devotees to be given *siddha-praṇālī-dikṣā* before passing the stage of inner cleansing from material desire (*anartha-nivṛtti*).

Bhaktisiddhānta did not emphasize *ajāta-rati rāgānuṅgā sādhana*. Indeed, he seems to have downplayed it altogether, or at

least any attempts to practice it in conjunction with discussion of one's spiritual identity before passing the stage of *anartha-nivṛtti*. There is reason to believe that he imbibed this sense from Bhaktivinoda who voiced numerous cautions regarding premature discussion of one's spiritual identity. In his *Bhajana-rahasya*, for example, Bhaktivinoda advises that acquaintance with one's *siddha-deha* is appropriate at the stage of positive attachment to the object of devotion (*āsakti*). He draws this understanding from Śrī Caitanya's eight-verse *Śikṣāṣṭakam*, which he sees as corresponding to the eightfold evolution of devotion from initial faith (*śraddhā*) to love of Kṛṣṇa (*prema*) delineated in Rūpa Goswāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*.<sup>13</sup> Bhaktivinoda identifies the fifth verse of *Śikṣāṣṭakam* with the stage of *āsakti*, drawing attention to the words *ayi nandanuḥja kiṅkaram*, wherein Śrī Caitanya first speaks of a spiritual identity. *Āsakti* occurs after *niṣṭhā* and *ruci*. It is the final stage of *sādhana-bhakti* before one enters *bhāva bhakti*. Bhaktivinoda taught, "The intelligence of one who thinks of his *siddha-deha* without first achieving eligibility becomes bewildered."<sup>14</sup>

If there is any license for engaging in *rāgānuḡā sādhana* before passing the *anartha-nivṛtti* stage, it comes from Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. In his *Rāga-vartma-candrikā*, Viśvanātha says that *rāgānuḡā bhakti* can be taken up by those who have not yet reached the stage of *niṣṭhā*. He says, "In the following section it will be shown how a *rāgānuḡā bhakta* goes through the stages of *anartha-nivṛtti*, etc., after which he arrives

at the stage of *prema*, whereupon he achieves direct attainment of his desired object.”<sup>15</sup>

However, in *Bhakti-sāra-pradarśinī*,<sup>16</sup> Viśvanātha tells us that in order to practice *rāgānuṅgā bhakti* one must have attained the stage of *niṣṭhā*. To resolve this apparent contradiction we must place Viśvanātha’s statements in relation to Jīva Goswāmī’s description of *ajāta-rati rāgānuṅgā sādhana* (Śrī Jīva uses the term *ajāta-ruci*). Doing so, we arrive at something that resembles Bhaktisiddhānta’s understanding.

Jīva Goswāmī has explained that *ajāta-rati rāgānuṅgā bhakti* can be performed in conjunction with *vaidhī bhakti* by adding those elements of *rāgānuṅgā sādhana* to one’s practice that one is capable of engaging in (*yathā-yogyam*).<sup>17</sup> Capability here refers to the extent of one’s eager longing to follow in the footsteps of Kṛṣṇa’s eternal associates in Vraja. As such longing increases through association with advanced devotees and reading descriptions of the loving relationships between Kṛṣṇa and his *gopa/gopīs* in eternal Vraja, revelation gives rise to *niṣṭhā* and then taste (*ruci*) for a particular *bhāva*, which forms the basis of one’s spiritual identity.

Although *sādhakas* may take up *rāgānuṅgā sādhana* before passing through *anartha-nivṛtti*, it is only their capability to practice such, which is measured by eagerness, that qualifies them for acquaintance with their *siddha-deha*. It should be understood that genuine eagerness for such will in most cases be considerably lacking in those who have not passed beyond *anartha-nivṛtti*, and

thus Bhaktisiddhānta's dismissal of *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā* for those who have not yet passed this stage. Because the nectar of *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā* was being given out like water, Bhaktisiddhānta reacted to this excess by practically dismissing it altogether. As Buddha appears to have rejected the Veda, while in fact he rejected its inappropriate application, Bhaktisiddhānta appears to have rejected *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā*, while in reality he rejected its misappropriation.

Bhaktisiddhānta accordingly was particularly critical of the custom of giving so-called *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā* when both the guru and disciple were *ajāta-rati bhaktas*. One aware of the details of a particular *praṇāli* can give a spiritual identity to another that technically conforms to the parameters of *rasa-tattva*. However, in the estimation of Bhaktisiddhānta, such practice does not constitute actual *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā*. This practice was and still is commonplace in many branches of the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya*, whereas actual *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā* is the prerogative of those who have attained maturity in their *bhajana (āpana daśā)*.

At the same time that Bhaktisiddhānta criticized what he would have called mere imitation of *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā*, he did recognize highly advanced devotees outside of his own missionary activities. Great souls such as Vamśī dāsa bābājī were pointed out by the Ṭhākura to his disciples, and on occasion some of his disciples had the opportunity to observe or to serve them. These souls may well have given this type of *dikṣā* on occasion to qualified persons. It appears that there were other evolved souls at the

time who, although perhaps qualified themselves, gave *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā* to unqualified persons. This should be construed as an act of mercy, and we are not to judge the decisions of great souls. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, however, having been commissioned by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura to propagate Śrī Caitanya's religion of love all over the world, and theoretically at least in a position to do the same, did not approve of doing so in consideration of the importance of the missionary activities. When unqualified people demonstrate their lack of a basic moral sense in the name of *rāgānugā bhakti*, public esteem of Śrī Caitanya's gift is lowered. The condition of the Gauḍīya *sampradāya* during the time of Bhaktivinoda is evidence of the negative effects of *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā* when given to unqualified persons. Public opinion of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism was at a low ebb, so much so that pious people considered it nothing more than a so-called religion designed to give licence to immorality. The goal of Bhaktisiddhānta's reform was to re-establish the movement's prestige by uprooting the moral laxity being promoted by immature culture of *rāgānugā-sādhana*.

## II. Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura's approach to rāgānugā bhakti

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As mentioned earlier, there is no record of Bhaktisiddhānta ever receiving *siddha-praṇālī-dikṣā* from his *dikṣā guru*, Gaura Kiśora dāsa babāji. Some of his followers say that he was told by Gaura Kiśora that he would realize his *svarūpa* in the syllables of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.

Bhaktisiddhānta fashioned his own approach to realizing one's spiritual identity and engaging in *rāgānugā sādhana*, one that appears to have been based on practices predating *siddha-praṇālī-dikṣā*. His approach has its foundation in the *sāstra* and the spiritual common sense that pierces the veil of the literal word addressing its intent. In this approach, he laid more stress on *kīrtana* than *smaraṇam*. *Kīrtana* can be practiced by all, whereas *smaraṇam* requires a degree of purity for its practice to be effective. *Smaraṇam* in turn enables one to derive more benefit from *kīrtana*. While *smaraṇam* requires purity of heart, *kīrtana* does not. *Kīrtana* cleanses the heart and qualifies one for *smaraṇam*. Attempts at *smaraṇam* for beginners are questionable. *Smaraṇam* is not a mental practice, but rather the result of subjugating the mind, and *kīrtana* is most effective in bringing about this subjugation. Thus, although *rāgānugā bhakti* involves *smaraṇam*, *kīrtana* is its primary limb.<sup>18</sup> Addressing imitative *smaraṇam*, Bhaktisiddhānta wrote in his famous song *Vaiṣṇava ke: kīrtana prabhāve smaraṇa haibe se kāle bhajana nirjane sambhava,*

“*Smaranam* can occur by the power of *kirtana*, and only then is solitary service possible.”

By “imitative *smaranam*” Bhaktisiddhānta referred to neophytes attempting *lilā smaranam*, and thus imitating advanced souls. He considered such practices no more than mental exercises. As *śraddhā*, the birth of *bhakti*, cannot be produced in our mental factory, similarly, and even more so, Kṛṣṇa *lilā*, the culmination of a life of devotion, is not the result of a mental exercise. It awakens in the purified heart as a result of *nāma kirtana*, at which time it can be meditated upon successfully. After all, the *lilā* of Kṛṣṇa is considered by all to be fully present in his divine name. Following the lead of Jīva Goswāmī, Bhaktisiddhānta advocated *nāma smaranam* for beginners, which leads successively to *rūpa smaranam*, *gīna smaranam*, and ultimately *lilā smaranam*.<sup>19</sup>

In *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, Jīva Goswāmī emphasizes the relative importance of *kirtanam* over *smaranam* thus: “These words of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* show that the glorification of the Lord (*kirtana*) is much more important than meditation, which leads in stages to *samādhi*. This is also confirmed by the following words of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: ‘O King, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all. . . .’ In every *yuga*, *kirtana* is equally powerful. However, since the Lord, by his mercy, preaches this method in *kali yuga* it has been praised as being comparatively most important. In *kali yuga*, the other activities of devotional service should be performed in connection with *kirtana*.<sup>20</sup>

In his *Śrī Caitanya-sikṣāmṛtam*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura speaks of two types of devotees in the stage just prior to becoming a *paramahaṁsa*. He calls them *goṣṭhyānandī* and *bhajanānandī*. While the latter engages in solitary *bhajana* and gives stress to *smaraṇam*, the former goes on with *kīrtana* and also attains the highest stage without having to resort to exclusive *smaraṇam*. Bhaktisiddhānta advocated the life of a *goṣṭhyānandī*. He taught that attempts at *smaraṇam* in the lower stages of devotion were potentially injurious. *Kīrtana*, on the other hand, is effective in the beginning of one’s devotional life as well as in the end.

In his emphasis on *kīrtana*, Bhaktisiddhānta followed the lead of Śrī Caitanya himself, who singled out *kīrtana* as the best form of worship, *sarva-sreṣṭha nāma-saṅkīrtana*.<sup>21</sup> Śrī Caitanya was told by his guru that the essence of the *Bhāgavatam* is found in a verse describing the results of accepting a vow to chant the holy name: “One who vows to chant in *kīrtana* the names of his dear Lord develops *anurāga bhajana*. He thus becomes agitated, and eagerly chanting he sometimes laughs, cries, and acts like a madman not caring what people think of him.”<sup>22</sup> Śrī Caitanya tells Sarvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, “Simply by chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, one is relieved from all the reactions of a sinful life. One can complete the nine processes of devotional service simply by chanting the holy name.”<sup>23</sup> One of these nine processes is *smaraṇa*.<sup>24</sup> The *Bhāgavata* characterizes Śrī Caitanya’s method of worship as *yajñaiḥ sankīrtana-prāyair*.<sup>25</sup> *Yajñaiḥ* means sacrifice and *kīrtana-prāyair* means predominated by *kīrtana*.

Bhaktisiddhānta's idea of *kīrtana* was dynamic, extending to include the modern world of technology in its reach. He included writing in his understanding of *kīrtana*, wherein considerable mental concentration is required. To preach and propagate in such *kīrtana* was, in his estimation, the most powerful means for subjugating the mind, giving rise to internal meditation upon the actual *līlā*. In contrast, to sit in the jungle and practice *līlā smaraṇa* is no easy task. Without a pure heart, one's mind is likely to prevail rather than the *līlā*. Comparatively, how mentally consuming is the task of propagating the esoteric theology of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in modern language to a world under the influence of an entirely different metanarrative?

Bhaktisiddhānta dubbed the printing press *bṛhat-mṛdaṅga*, "great drum," reasoning that the chanting of the sacred name could be heard for a few blocks, whereas the printed *kīrtana* could be heard around the world. He considered the printing press to belong to *rāga-mārga* of *rāgānugā sādhana*. He stressed this all-consuming notion of *kīrtana* to his disciples and supplemented it with esoteric *dikṣā* mantras.

The initiations that Bhaktisiddhānta gave to his disciples included the standard *dikṣā* mantras of the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, *gopāla mantra* and its corresponding *gāyatrī* commonly known as *kāma gāyatrī*, *gaura mantra* and *gaura gāyatrī*, *guru mantra* and *guru gāyatrī*. He also gave *brahma gāyatrī* to his disciples. Other than this, he gave *sannyāsa dikṣā* which involves a *siddha mantra* relating to Vraja *bhakti*. This is the same *siddha mantra* that those

who accept the life of a *bābājī* receive. All of these *mantras* are extremely esoteric in their import, and their efficacy is liberation from *samsāra* and a conceptual orientation (*sambandha*) to *Vraja bhakti*. The holy name of *Kṛṣṇa*, which is to be chanted by all practitioners, is fully competent to grant entrance into *Vraja līlā*, especially when chanted by a liberated soul who has awakened to his or her spiritual identity by perfecting the *dikṣā mantra*.

It is said that the *muni-cārī gopīs* who are *sādhana siddha gopīs* attained *svarūpa siddhi* by perfecting the chanting of these *dikṣā mantras* (*gopāla mantra*). According to *Padma Purāṇa*, *Gāyatrī* herself desired *gopī bhāva* and thus incarnated as *Gopāla-tāpaṇī Upaniṣad*, in which the *kāma bija* and *gopāla mantra* are revealed.

*Jīva Goswāmī* explains in his commentary on *Gopāla-tāpaṇī Upaniṣad* that the *śruti* brings up questions posed by various *ṛṣis* to *Brahmā* so that the mystery of the eighteen-syllable *gopāla mantra* might be revealed. They ask plainly and confidently, without hesitation about confidential matters, thus indicating their *adhikāra* for *rāgānuṅgā sādhana*. *Brahmā* is driven by the inquiries of the sages to contemplate, “How can a special taste in devotional practice be attained?” Thus he begins to explain the import of the *gopāla mantra*.<sup>26</sup>

The same *gopāla mantra* in conjunction with *nāma-saṅkīrtana* gave *Gopa Kumāra* of *Sanātana Prabhu’s Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta Vraja bhakti*. *Sanātana Goswāmī* explains that *Gopa Kumāra* was instructed in *Dvārakā* by *Nārada* and *Uddhava* to return to earth-

ly Vṛndāvana and perform *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, by which he could easily attain his final destination (Vraja *bhakti*). Remembering Nārada’s instructions, Gopa Kumāra says, “Following Nārada’s instructions, I chanted sweetly in *saṅkīrtana* the dear names of Kṛṣṇa, and I sang and meditated upon His pastimes here (in earthly Vṛndāvana).”<sup>27</sup>

The chanting of a *siddha mantra* is central to any *siddha* practice, and it appears from the example above that the *gopāla mantra* especially in conjunction with *nāma saṅkīrtana* is a powerful spiritual practice. Indeed, this is precisely what is recommended in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: “The efficacy of *kṛṣṇa mantra* is that it affords one deliverance from *saṁsāra*, while *kṛṣṇa nāma* delivers one to the feet of Kṛṣṇa.”<sup>28</sup> Here “*kṛṣṇa mantra*” refers to the eighteen syllable *mantra* also known as *gopāla mantra* and its corresponding *gāyatrī*, *kāma gāyatrī*. Deliverance from *saṁsāra* in the context of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism refers to *svarūpa siddhi*, realization of one’s *svarūpa*.<sup>29</sup> Upon attaining this realization, *kṛṣṇa mantra* retires while *kṛṣṇa nāma* chanted in such a liberated condition delivers one to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa (*vastu siddhi*). This appears to be the system recommended by Bhaktisiddhānta, one that predates the introduction of *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā*. In this regard, it is worth noting that the term *siddha-praṇālī* does not appear anywhere in the writings of the Six Goswāmīs.

Jīva Goswāmī also mentions the eighteen-syllable *gopāla mantra* in relation to *rāgānugā sādhana* in terms of its relevance

for advanced *sādhakas* and neophytes. In his *Bhakti-sandarbha*, Jīva Goswāmī instructs that this *mantra* is chanted by advanced devotees, who when doing so envision the *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa, as well as by neophytes, who chant with a view to attain such vision.<sup>30</sup>

The notion that revelation of one's *siddha deha* can arise naturally in the course of spiritual practice without the necessity of *siddha-praṇāli dikṣā* makes spiritual common sense, given that the practitioner is aspiring for Vraja *bhakti* to begin with. That such is possible is mentioned in Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī's commentary on *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*. Commenting on the first verse of Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura, Kavirāja Goswāmī speaks of two methods of approach to *rāgānugā* practice: one in which the spiritual identity is assigned and another in which it is awakened (*sphūrti*) through spiritual practice at the stage of *bhāva*, without the need of any forced meditation.

Two other Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* that involve Vraja *bhakti* are worth noting. The Nimbārka and Vallabha lineages are both *rāga mārga sampradāyas*. Neither of them has any initiation ritual analogous to *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā*. Rather devotees of these lineages are expected to attain the *rāga mārga* through the perfection of their *dikṣā mantra*. Of these two paths, Rūpa Goswāmī has mentioned Vallabha's *puṣṭi mārga* after his description of *rāgānugā sādhana*, equating it with the *rāgānugā* of the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*.<sup>31</sup>

In recent years, two devotees who left the lineage of Bhaktisiddhānta and took *siddha-praṇāli-dikṣā* elsewhere have

also confirmed in their writings that *rāgānugā sādhana* and realization of one's *svarūpa* is possible without *siddha-praṇālī dikṣa*. Gadādhara prāṇa dāsa, a disciple of Lalitā Prasāda, says in *Why Did Caitanya Mahāprabhu Come, and What Did He Come to Give (Part One)*: “If a person desiring to perform *rāgānugā sādhana* has previously received initiation from a *sampradāya* in which the system of *siddha-praṇālī* is not available, and if he is reluctant to perform the *dikṣā-saṁskāra*, another alternative may feasibly be adopted. Such persons may meditate on their *nitya-svarūpa* according to the *ātma-dhyāna* in *śāstra*. Placing faith on the *acintya-śakti* of *hari-nāma*, *aṣṭaṣṭkālīna mānasī sevā* may be performed with the following *ātma-dhyāna*:” (*Sanat-kumāra-saṁhitā* cited). Nitai dāsa (Neal Delmonico), who accepted *siddha-praṇālī* from Kīsorikīsorānanda bābājī of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and is currently a professor at the University of Iowa, writes in *Sacred Gifts of Wonder*, “It [*siddha deha*] is produced either in the course of practice or given by the guru in a special initiation [*siddha-praṇālī dikṣā*].”<sup>32</sup>

In the approach to *rāgānugā bhakti* of Bhaktisiddhānta, esoteric practices of *rāgānugā sādhana* are not dismissed, nor are they imitated. As *ruci* and *āśakti* stages are reached, these internal practices are incorporated into the *sādhaka*'s practice. Before reaching these stages, *sādhakas* may also consider themselves *rāgānugā* practitioners proportionate to their eagerness for attaining *Vraja bhakti*. They are not, however, to entertain artificial internal practices, projecting their material conceptions into

transcendence. Their interest in a particular spiritual identity must come through a purified heart in *nāma bhajana*, and not from the force of their imagination. Although internal practices in the stage of *ruci* are natural rather than forced, further *sikṣā* in this stage is in the least helpful. When the practitioner moves from *ajāta rati* to *jāta rati rāgānuṣāṅgā sādhana*, his practice has flowered, waiting only to bear the fruit of *prema*.

In contrast to the practices that Bhaktisiddhānta criticized, his methodology has been characterized by the phrase, “Don’t try to see God, but act such a way that God will want to see you.” By encouraging his disciples to serve in his dynamic conception of *kīrtana*, he promised them that Kṛṣṇa would not ignore them. Indeed, they would become qualified to tread the path of *rāgānuṣāṅgā bhakti* and do so successfully while bringing dignity to the doctrine of Śrī Caitanya the world over, a world that at that time equated godliness with morality. Thus his stress on a moral foundation to spiritual practice was no doubt influenced by his perception of the religious climate of the world at that time. It was undoubtedly influenced by Śrī Caitanya’s own example in this regard as well.<sup>33</sup>

### III. Defense of the śikṣā paramparā

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If it is possible to attain Vraja *bhakti* in the *paramparā* of Bhaktisiddhānta without the necessity of *siddha-praṇālī dikṣa*, one question still remains: What is the *guru paramparā* of Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura? The Ṭhākura has revealed this in his song *Śrī Guru paramparā*, and in so doing, introduced the concept of a *śikṣā* or *bhāgavata guru paramparā*.

At a glance, the idea of a *śikṣā guru paramparā* appears to be a concoction with no basis in the scripture and no historical record in the tradition. The *paramparā* is a succession from guru to disciple, who in turn becomes guru, thus passing on the lineage to his disciple through the ritual of initiation. Although instructions (*śikṣā*) are important, without initiation one is not a card-carrying member of any *sampradāya*. The *paramparā* is the lineage into which one is initiated. What then is a *śikṣā paramparā*, in which devotees are said to be linked by something (*śikṣā*) other than initiation, and in which such connection crosses over different lines of succession and even in some cases ignores initiating gurus in the process?

To better understand the *śikṣā guru paramparā* of Bhaktisiddhānta and its validity, we must first consider the state of the Gauḍīya *sampradāya* during his time. As mentioned earlier, the Gauḍīya *sampradāya* was not highly esteemed at the turn of the 20th century. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura himself admitted his own bias against the *Bhāgavata*, one imbibed from the pious Hindu

circles in which he circulated. In such circles, the *Bhāgavata* was considered to be a justification of immoral life in the name of religion. He thus shocked the pious of his time when after due consideration he announced his faith in Śrī Caitanya and rejected the movements of the prominent Hindu reformers.

After joining the *sampradāya*, he preached vigorously about its actual doctrine and practice, and in so doing he exposed much of the distortion of Śrī Caitanya's teaching that had come to dominate the religious landscape in his name. He passed the torch of his campaign of reform to his son and devout follower, Bimalā Prasāda, the renowned Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura. His choice to be succeeded in this effort by Bimalā Prasāda no doubt took into consideration the boy's extraordinary good moral character, his erudition, and ultimately his devotion. After giving him initiation into chanting the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura sent him to Gaura Kiśora dāsa bābājī for *mantra dikṣā*. Thus he readied him for the service he had in mind: restoring Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism to its rightful place at the peak of the great mountain of religious thought in the eyes of the modern world.

The degradation that the tradition suffered from at the time included various *dikṣā* lineages that, although stemming originally from one of the eternally liberated associates of Śrī Caitanya, had become little more than a means of material livelihood for their so-called gurus. Claims of monopoly on the religious heritage of Śrī Caitanya were common. Places of spiritual

significance were held hostage by these unscrupulous people, who in the name of restoring them and offering blessings bilked pilgrims while keeping the holy sites in perpetual disrepair. A number of the once spiritual lineages had become lines of seminal succession, passed on from husband to wife and father to son, with little consideration of actual spiritual standing. Several of these lineages were also tainted by *smarta brāhmaṇa* influences stemming from Śaṅkara. It is these types of initiating lineages that Bhaktisiddhānta rejected.

The extent of the distortion may have justified the magnitude of his response. Although others at that time may have sympathized with him, he alone was prepared to speak out. In doing so, he may have even criticized those following properly at the time for their reluctance to join with him in his efforts. They too were implicated in his estimation. Was such a campaign justifiable? Anyone who today has been touched by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism as a result of this campaign must bow their head at the mere mention of his name, and the number of such persons is at this point uncountable, extending to all nations of the world.

Bhaktisiddhānta's *sikṣā guru paramparā* involved weaving his spiritual lineage out of the fabric of substance rather than form. Considering the condition of the prominent *dikṣā paramparās*, he placed in his line all of the universally acknowledged *mahā-bhāgavatas* appearing at one time or another in the various lineages. Thus his line crossed all of the lineages of the time and united them while dismissing them as well. He made a

line (*praṇālī*) of *siddhas* and claimed that connection with all of them was the right of all sincere followers of Śrī Caitanya. Their teaching (*śikṣā*) and adherence to it was the binding force to the *sampradāya*.

In all of his criticism of the lineages of the time, his clear intent was that of unification on spiritual terms. He wanted to separate followers of form from those of substance, and he expected those of substance to speak up for the dignity of Śrī Caitanya's precepts. He in no way dispensed with the institution of *dikṣā*. Indeed, he initiated thousands of disciples himself.

One of his prominent disciples, Bhakti Rākṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja, has spoken about his Gurudeva's spiritual conception of *paramparā* thus: "In *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* the story is told of how Gopa Kumāra, by chanting his *gopāla mantra*, gradually leaves one stage and progresses to the next. There the gradation of devotion is traced. . . . In this zigzag way he is passing. . . . He is going from this side to that side, and going up. There is Prahlāda's *guru-paramparā*, Hanumān's *guru-paramparā*, the Pāṇḍavas' *guru-paramparā*, Mahādeva's *guru-paramparā*. . . . but Gopa Kumāra passes them also. . . . So, *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* has shown us the line of our *guru-paramparā*, or the real line of our quest, of our search. . . . The very gist of the *guru-paramparā*, the disciplic succession, is *śikṣā*, the spiritual teaching, and wherever it is to be traced, there is guru. One who has the transcendental eye, the divine eye, will recognize the guru wherever he appears. One who possesses knowledge of absolute divine love in purity

he is guru. Otherwise, the *guru-paramparā* is only a body *paramparā*, a succession of bodies. Then the caste *brāhmaṇas*, the caste *goswāmīs*, will continue with their trade, because body after body, they are getting the *mantra*. But their *mantra* is dead. We are after a living *mantra*, and wherever we can trace the living tendency for a higher type of devotional service, we shall find that there is our guru. One who has that sort of vision awakened will be able to recognize the guru wherever he may appear.”<sup>34</sup>

Scriptural evidence for a *bhāgavata* and *śikṣā guru-paramparā* can be drawn from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in terms of its own descent. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most important scripture for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. How has it come to them—what is its *paramparā*? Kṛṣṇa spoke its essence to Brahmā. Brahmā spoke it to Nārada, and Nārada in turn taught Vyāsa its tenets. Śukadeva, who was known to have undergone no *dikṣā saṁskāra*, learned its essence from Vyāsa. Śukadeva spoke it to the emperor Parikṣit. At that time, Sūta heard it as well, and he in turn spoke it to Śaunaka. This is the *bhāgavata guru-paramparā*, a *śikṣā paramparā*.

Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura, speaking out against the conception of a formal *dikṣā guru-paramparā* taking precedence over a substantial spiritual *guru-paramparā* of great realized preceptors, thus fashioned his *bhāgavata* (or *śikṣā*) *guru-paramparā*. His is not a formal line of physical bodies, but a line, a *praṇālī*, that is full of *siddhas*. One might ask, “What is the meaning of a *siddha-praṇālī* (line of *siddhas*) if it is not full of *siddhas*?” Thus Saraswatī Ṭhākura’s criticism of *siddha-praṇālī* included his

rejection of a once bonafide system of *guru-paramparā* that for the most part had deteriorated into a seminal line of family gurus claiming a monopoly on spiritual life.

Saraswatī Ṭhākura considered that the wealth he found in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura came more from Jagannātha dāsa bābājī than it did from his connection with Bipin Bihārī Goswāmī. Indeed, there is evidence that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *dikṣā* guru dismissed him for preaching that the true birth site of Śrī Caitanya was in Mayapur and not Navadvīpa,<sup>35</sup> whereas Jagannātha dāsa bābājī confirmed the Ṭhākura's insight with delight. The initiating and instructing gurus are equal manifestations of the the Absolute. At the same time, one may be of greater importance to the disciple than another. Which guru is the most important? The one who helps us the most. For Bhaktivinoda it was his *sikṣā* guru, Jagannātha dāsa bābājī.

Bhaktivinoda was the *sikṣā* guru of Bhaktisiddhānta. There is good reason to believe that Bhaktisiddhānta inherited the inner wealth of Bhaktivinoda, as evidenced in his ability to distinguish its substance from the form in which it came to Bhaktivinoda, to repackage that essence and market it worldwide as Bhaktivinoda so desired. While referring to his own treatise, *Tattva-sūtra*, Bhaktivinoda instructs us all as to the nature and appropriateness of Bhaktisiddhānta's innovations. "Devotees of the Supreme Lord are not controlled by the scriptures since their activities are congenial to divine wisdom. Therefore, when the self-realized devotees ordain any new arrangement, this should

be followed as a religious code, even if such new arrangements are not found in the scriptural dictums of the previous sages.”

The *śikṣā* of Bhaktisiddhānta that gave rise to his undertaking of a spiritual mission must be embraced for its underlying spiritual principle. The form it took is of less consequence, and unless his own followers understand this, they may unwittingly become party to that which he stood against. There is nothing from the *sampradāya* that he rejected, rather the abuse or misunderstanding of its tenets.

## IV. Conclusion: Gauḍīya Saraswata sampradāya today

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As Bhaktisiddhānta was in some instances misunderstood during his time by those he opposed, so today in some instances he is misunderstood by those who claim to be his followers. The dominant institution that his mission gave birth to is the formal mission of A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda, ISKCON. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī considered himself a strict follower of Bhaktisiddhānta. Accordingly, he boldly preached in the Western world with tremendous success. Today, twenty-one years after his departure from the world, his mission boasts thousands of followers. ISKCON has more facility and does more to propagate the precepts of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism than any other institution, and perhaps more so than all of other similar missions combined. Yet it suffers from a weakness. It is largely uninformed with regard to its *rāgānuṅā* heritage. In this I do not fault its founder, but his followers, who were often more concerned with distributing his books than they were with reading them and tracing out their connection with the greater body of Gauḍīya literature, literature that is recommended in the commentaries of Bhaktivedānta Swāmī and from which his own commentaries are drawn.

The valid stress of Bhaktisiddhānta on the need for qualification to tread the path of *rāgānuṅā sādhana* was echoed and even magnified appropriately by his disciple Bhaktivedānta

Swāmī Prabhupāda to his fledgling Western following. So too did Bhaktivedānta Swāmī stress *kīrtana*, employing the world of modern technology in its outreach, thus paving the road for his disciples' natural progress.

Unfortunately, there are dangers even on the royal roads, and so with the dynamic *kīrtana* of Bhaktisiddhānta. In spite of its enormous potential to subjugate the mind, distraction is possible—and in no small measure. When we employ modern technology such as computers in *kīrtana*, there is potential to be employed by that technology in the name of employing it in divine service. Without sufficient stress on the inner life of *bhajana*, one's *kīrtana* can become more musical than mystical, preaching ego effacement can be tinged with self-promotion, employing modern technology can result in fascination with megabytes rather than their maker. In preaching against the idea of an inherited monopoly on spiritual life, one can fall prey to thinking oneself its sole proprietor, even while still an *ajāta rati sādḥaka*.

ISKCON, a late-blooming adolescent of thirty-three years, has suffered from these problems to some extent, the solution to which lies only in reassessment of the ideal of its father, grandfather, and great grandfather, its theoretical pioneer. The life of Vraja *bhakti* is the spiritual heritage of ISKCON. Today, members who express too much interest in this heritage are sometimes considered suspect. Some members of ISKCON's parent mission, Gauḍīya Māṭha, for the sins of not cooperating with one another

and lack missionary zeal, have been at times erroneously labeled *sahajiyās*, even while these elders have on occasion sincerely sought to help their spiritual nephews with enriched understanding of their inheritance.

As ISKCON continues its worldwide preaching campaign, it needs to pause and ask itself what the goal of such preaching is. Its senior members need greater theoretical acquaintance with their heritage and its esoteric practices, so they don't mistake them to be the property of those whom Bhaktisiddhānta opposed, rather than their own. They need to unite with the rest of the family of Bhaktisiddhānta, which would also help them to unite with one another. The members of ISKCON need to remember that other than their Founder Ācārya's stress on preaching, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda was concerned that through this they would actually awaken to the inner life of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. They need to remember the criterion for ISKCON's success drawn from the words of Bhaktisiddhānta that Bhaktivedānta Swāmī sometimes cited, "If I could perfectly deliver even one soul back to home, back to Godhead, I would think my mission of propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness to be successful."<sup>36</sup>

ISKCON is not alone in falling short of the ideal of Bhaktisiddhānta. Today, his followers, now in various institutions, are faced with a spiritual crisis. They themselves are not unified, what to speak of unifying all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. In some instances, they have become overly critical of other Vaiṣṇavas even within their own ranks, what to speak of those who do

not come in their *dikṣā paramparā*, regardless of their spiritual qualities. The dynamic missionary zeal of Bhaktisiddhānta that involved understanding the modern world and updating the tradition to present its precepts with a voice of relevance is lacking in many of the institutions founded in his name. Western visitors to any number of “Gauḍīya Māṭha” institutions are often entertained with tales of preaching conquests dating back to British India by devotees resting on past laurels of their predecessors. Those from India recently entering the international arena focus their preaching on devotees, the remnants of Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda’s campaign. While this certainly has value when it helps such devotees better understand their heritage, it is not the cutting-edge, dynamic preaching envisioned by Bhaktisiddhānta. Moreover, in several instances, it has given rise to further division and sectarianism with claims of exclusivity. Such a spiritual crisis must be met with introspection and reflection on the substance of the Ṭhākura’s spiritual thrust and its scope.

The followers of Bhaktisiddhānta must take care to guard against institutionalized conceptions of spiritual succession obscuring the spiritual descent. As he was prepared to critique his own tradition, so they in his spirit should be prepared to offer constructive criticism to not only those who continue to inappropriately offer *siddha-praṇālī-dikṣā* but when appropriate, to their own lineage as well. If the followers of Bhaktisiddhānta can find true spiritual guidance outside of his formal lineage,

they should respect it, as he himself in theory and practice demonstrated. In such instances, his followers should in turn use their gathered inspiration in the mission of Bhaktisiddhānta, the spiritual mission of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, to promote worldwide the spiritual precepts of Śrī Caitanya and realize the esoteric ultimate reality of Vraja *bhakti*, thus fulfilling the dream of Kedarnātha Bhaktivinoda, as Bhaktivinoda-*parivāra*.

## Appendix: From Anārtha-Nivṛtti to Artha-Pravṛtti

The following is a transcription of a lecture delivered by Bhaktisiddhānta at Rādhā-kuṇḍa during Vraja-maṇḍala parikramā in 1932. It was first printed in Bengali in *The Gauḍīya* (1934).

All these days we have not spoken about *lilā*. Why? Because this is our most confidential asset. This is our only *sādhya*. But one should not make the mistake of thinking that *anartha-nivṛtti* is the *prayojana*. One thinking like this will never enter into *artha-pravṛtti*. For this reason, I will begin speaking about *aṣṭa-kāliya-lilā*.

I know that you are not ready to hear it. But we should know such a transcendental idea exists within the realm of devotion. This is why *anartha-nivṛtti* is essential. After the realm of *anartha-nivṛtti* is *artha-pravṛtti*, pure conjugal service to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This is transcendental reality. If we do not know of this transcendental realm, then all of our efforts may end in *nirviśeṣa-vāda*. Do not let your day pass in trying for *anartha-nivṛtti*. *Artha-pravṛtti* is also necessary. *Anartha-nivṛtti* is necessary until *artha-pravṛtti* has started. When *artha-pravṛtti* is present, then *anartha-nivṛtti* becomes unimportant—*artha-pravṛtti* becomes prominent.

Those who have chanted *hari nāma* for fifteen or twenty years should know such things. The beginners need not hear

these topics or they will misunderstand. These topics are for certain audiences, not for all. Also, it is said, *apana bhajana-kathā na kahibe jathātatha*, “One should not reveal one’s *bhajana* to others.” If we disregard this instruction of our previous *ācāryas*, then there may be a permanent fall from the realm of devotional service.

By removing the clothes of the *gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa obtained happiness; this is Kṛṣṇa’s sense gratification. We cannot ask, “Why is he a sense enjoyer?” “Let us see Kṛṣṇa display the behavior of controlling his senses.” Kṛṣṇa will not become a slave to our desires. Kṛṣṇa, by his own will, can show us sense restraint—he did show it in his form as Gaurasundara. By that example, he is informing us that no one except Kṛṣṇa has the right to remove the clothes of the *gopīs*. Our duty is to cultivate devotional service.

Do not think that *aṣṭakāliya-lilā smaraṇa* is the property of the *sahajiyās*. Actually it is our affair. It has to be retrieved from the hands of the *sahajiyās*. Our Śrī Guru-pāda Padma heard these things from Śrīla Bhaktivonoda Ṭhākura. That is why he used to tell us various confidential things. We have heard the last instructions from our Śrī Gurudeva. He said, “Living in Rādhākuṇḍa would be pleasant if you can deliver it from the hands of eleven immoral men.” Now, perhaps eleven has increased to one hundred and eight.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Bhaktivinoda's letter to Bhaktisiddhānta reproduced in *Prabhupāda Sarasvatī Ṭhākura* (San Francisco: Mandala Publishing Group, 1998) 18 .

<sup>2</sup> To which, however, there were witnesses.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to the combined influence of the *sāṃvit* and *hlādinī śakti*, the ingress of which into one's heart constitutes the dawning of love of Kṛṣṇa, *śuddha sattva viśeṣātma prema sūryāṁśu sāmyabhāk*. Brs. 1.3.2

<sup>4</sup> *kṛṣṇa śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana* (Cc. Antya 7.11)

<sup>5</sup> The disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta consider him to be a *nitya siddha* who did not need to undergo spiritual practice. However, even the *nitya siddha* may experience passing through the stages of devotion and revelation.

<sup>6</sup> *sevā sādha-rūpeṇa siddha-rūpeṇa cātra hi/  
tad-bhāva-lipsunā kāryā vraja-lokānusārataḥ//* (Brs. 1.2.295)

<sup>7</sup> Śukavāk dāsa has written about this in his forthcoming article, "ISKCON's Link to Sādhana Bhakti Within the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Tradition," scheduled to appear in the *Journal of Vaisnava Studies*, Vol. 6 No.2, Spring 1998. Therein, he mentions that the letter appears to have been written by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura himself, rather than Bipin Bihārī Goswāmī. The letter includes a list of those in his *dikṣā* lineage (*siddha praṇālī*) and a description of his *siddha deha* (*ekādaśa bhāva*).

<sup>8</sup> Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda, *Jaiva Dharma* (Madras: Śrī Gauḍiya Māṭha, 1994) 537.

<sup>9</sup> Their books bear the same title, *Śrī Gaura-govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati*.

<sup>10</sup> *tat-tad-bhāvādi-mādhurye śrute dhīr yad apekṣate/  
nātra sāstraṁ na yuktim ca tal lobhotpatti-lakṣaṇam//*Brs. 1.2.292

<sup>11</sup> Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura also character-

ized his brother, Lalitā Prasāda Ṭhākura, as “my *sahajiyā bhāi*.” In his case, he appears to have not only disapproved of a liberal attitude to the giving of *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā* and *rāgānugā* practice, but also disagreed with him over an approach to missionary activities and Lalita Prasada’s regard for Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *dīkṣā* guru, Bipin Bihari Goswāmī. It is well known that Saraswatī Ṭhākura did not have high regard for Bipin Bihari Goswāmī, and there is considerable evidence to support his contention that Jagānnatha dāsa bābāji was the guru (*sīkṣā* guru) from whom Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura imbibed the greatest spiritual benefit.

<sup>12</sup> *jāta-ajāta-rati-bhede sādḥaka dui bheda/*

*vidhi-rāga-māрге cāri cāri—aṣṭa bheda//* (Cc Mad 24.288)

<sup>13</sup> *ādau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅgo ‘tha bhajana-kriyā/ tato ‘nartha-nivṛttiḥ syāt tato niṣṭhā rucis tataḥ athāsaktis tato bhāvas tataḥ premābhyaudañcati/ sādḥakānām ayaṁ premaṅḥ prādurbhāve bhavet kramaḥ.* Brs.1.4.15–16

<sup>14</sup> *adhikāra na labhiyā siddhadeha bhāve/*

*viparyaya buddhī janme śaktira abhāve//*

Cited in the introductory notes, page xii, of Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi’s English edition of *Bhajana-rahasya*, in which there is no copyright or publishing information.

<sup>15</sup> *anartha-nivṛtti-niṣṭhā-rucy-āsakty-anantaram prema-bhūmikārūḍhasya sākṣāt svābhīṣṭha-prāpti-prakaraḥ pradarsyate*

<sup>16</sup> Bsp. 1.2.291–2

<sup>17</sup> *ajāta-tādṛśa-rucinā tu sad-viśeṣa ādaramātrādytā rāgānugāpi vaidhi-samvalitāvānuṣṭheyā/ tathā loka-sangrahārtham pratiṣṭhitena jāta-tādṛśa-rucinā ca/ atra miśratve ca yathā-yogyam rāgānugāyaikikṛtyaiva vaidhī kartavyā.* (*Bhakti-sandarbhā* 311, p. 165 of Chinmayī Chatterjee’s 1980 edition.)

“One in whom this taste (*ruci*) has not manifested, but has come to appreciate *rāgānugā bhakti* only on account of his appreciation of a particular saintly person (*sat*), he may still practice it but with an

admixture of *vaidhi-bhakti*. (Comment: *sat* here may well be *sāstra*, as this is the topic which precedes immediately prior to this paragraph in which *sāstrānādara*, or disregard of the scripture by a *rāgānugā-bhakta*, is discussed and condemned, though ignorance of the scripture is not. *Sat* may also be considered to stretch as far as to include both scriptures and holy persons, as in *Bhāgavata*. In the same way, for the sake of preaching (*loka-saṅgrahārtham*), one who is advanced and in whom taste has manifested, should also practice *rāgānugā* with an admixture of *vaidhi*.) Such a mixing of the two kinds of *bhakti* means that one practices *vaidhi bhakti* by uniting it with whatever *rāgānugā* practices one is capable of (*yathā-yogyam*).

<sup>18</sup> *yadyapy anyā bhaktiḥ kalau kartavyā tadā kīrtanākhya-bhakti-saṁyogenaiva* (Bs. 273).

<sup>19</sup> Bs. 275–279

<sup>20</sup> *iti samādhi-paryantād api smaraṇāt kaimuṭyena kīrtanasyaiva gāryastvaṁ śrī-viṣṇu-purāṇe darsitam, ata evoktam etan nirvidyamānānām ity ādi.*

*tasmāt sarvatraiva yuge śrīmat-kīrtanasya samānam eva sāmārthyam, kalau ca śrī-bhagavatā kṛpayā tad grāhyata ity apkeṣayaiva tatra tat-prasaṁseti sthitam. ata eva yad anyad api bhaktiḥ kalau kartavyā.* (Bs. 273)

<sup>21</sup> Cc Antya 4.71

<sup>22</sup> *evamvrataḥ sva-priya-nāma-kīrtiyā jātānurāgo druta-citta uccaiḥ/ hasaty atho roditi rauti gāyaty unmādavan nṛtyati loka-bāhyah//* (SB 11.2.49) Cited in Cc Adi 7.94

<sup>23</sup> *eka kṛṣṇa-nāme kare sarva-pāpa kṣaya/ nava-vidhā bhakti pūrṇa nāma haite haya//* (Cc Mad. 15.107)

<sup>24</sup> *śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam pāda sevnam/ arcanam vandanam dāsyam/ sakhyam ātma-nivedanam//* (SB 7.5.23).

<sup>25</sup> SB 11.5.32

26 Bābājī, Kṛṣṇadāsa ed., *Gopāla-tāpaniya Upaniṣad* (Rādhā-kuṇḍa Kusumsarovara: Gaurahari Press, 1955).

27 *taṁ nārādīyaṁ anusṛtya śikṣāṁ śrī kṛṣṇa nāmani nija priyani saṅkirtayan su-svaram atra lilās tasya pragayan anucintayāṁs ca* (Brb.2.6.1).

28 *kṛṣṇa-mantra haite habe saṁsāra-mocana/*

*kṛṣṇa-nāma haite pābe kṛṣṇera carana//* (Cc Adi 7.73)

29 *muktir hitvānyathā rūpaṁ sva-rūpeṇa vyavasthitiḥ* //(SB 2.10.6)

30 *kecid aṣṭādaśākṣara-dhyānaṁ go-dohana-samaya-vaṁśi-vādya-samākṛṣṭa-tat-tat-sarvamayatvena bhāvayanti// yathā caike tādrṣṣāṁ upāsanāṁ sakṣād vraja-jana-viśeṣāyaiva mahyaṁ śrī-guru-caranair madabhiṣṭa-viśeṣa-siddhy-artham upadiṣṭāṁ bhāvayāmi sakṣāt tu śrī-vrajendranandanam sevamāna evāsa iti bhāvayanti* (Bs 311)

31 *kṛṣṇa-tad-bhakta-kārūnya-mātra-lābhaika-hetukā puṣṭi-mārg-tayā kaizcidīyaṁ rāgānugocya* (Brs. 1.2.309)

32 Delmonico, Neal, ed., *Sacred Gifts of Wonder* (Calcutta: Indranath Majumdar Subarnarekha, 1986) 120.

33 Śrī Caitanya's observance of *sannyāsa* and its moral implications as described in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* were extremely strict.

34 Śrīdhara, Bhakti Rākṣaka, *Śrī Guru and His Grace* (San Jose, CA : Guardian of Devotion Press, 1983) Chapter 3.

35 Evidence that such a dismissal occurred is found in "Baghna Para Sampradāya O Vaiṣṇava Sahitya" by Kananbihārī Goswāmī (Calcutta: Rabindra Bharati Viśvavidyalaya, 1993). K. B. Goswāmī claims on the basis of an article written by Bipin Bihārī Goswāmī in Gaurangasevaka Patrika in 1919 (after Bhaktivinoda had passed on) that he was cutting Bhaktivinoda off for preaching an untruth (*mithyā pracāra*) because of his promotion of the Mayapura birth site of Śrī Caitanya.

36 A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (Los Angeles: Bhaktivedānta Book Trust, 1974) 4.12.23.