

UNCONVENTIONAL TEACHERS

An Appreciation of the Documentary

"The Universal Teacher"

Submitted by Syamarani dasi

"The Universal Teacher," a documentary on the life and teachings of Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, was recently produced by Sripad B.G. Narasingha Maharaja and his production team Devavision. According to internet reports, the DVD has quickly gained popular acclaim; at ISKCON Mayapura's first "Vaisnava Film/Video Festival" it was nominated for best script, best editing, best music score, and best graphics and special effects. It has been received in various communities as a dramatic and, at the same time, accurate account of Srila Sarasvati Thakura's life and precepts.

The efforts of His Holiness B.G. Narasingha Maharaja and Devavision to glorify the Lord and His pure devotee are praiseworthy. He and his team have shared with the world so many of Srila Prabhupada Sarasvati Thakura's pastimes, associates, books, articles and other details of his life, in a format which is at once pleasant, entertaining and informative. The statements of caution concerning higher topics are both deeply appreciated and essential to the healthy functioning of our Vaisnava community.

Of course, no presentation can ever be complete, and every scriptwriter faces the dilemma of having to be selective in his/her presentation. In the process, certain issues are inevitably privileged and others marginalized. With this in mind, we would like to present another side of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura's preaching, simply for the sake of balance and completeness. The following article is a humble attempt to complement some of the historical details of "The Universal Teacher," in a similar way that footnotes qualify, clarify and thereby beautify the original words of a text. Our aim is to highlight the natural harmony that exists among all pure devotees, who are also universal teachers.

"The Universal Teacher" documentary shows photos of Srila Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada, Sri Sri Radha-Krsna and Their beloved gopi associates, as the narrator comments with the following statements in sequence:

1. "Unlike other, so-called gurus and siddha-purusas of his time, Sarasvati Thakura did not allow his disciples to discuss the details of Krsna's amorous love with the gopis, although Sarasvati Thakura did indeed have many highly qualified disciples. He was particularly disturbed if he heard of any disciples discussing Rasa-lila."

2. "Sarasvati Thakura also did not allow his disciples to read such books as Gita-govinda, Ujjvala-nilamani or Govinda-lilamrta."

3. "Sarasvati Thakura's caution was:

matala hari-jane visaya range

pujala raga patha gaurava bange [\[click here for translation\]](#) (see page 28)

'Always worship the path of raga-marga, spontaneous devotion. Do not rush ahead. Keep yourself a little distant and below. One who transgresses these instructions will be cast down'. That was the motto of Gaudiya Matha."

4. A full-screen display of the cover of Srila Narayana Maharaja's translation and commentary on Sri Gita-govinda accompanied statement 2.

The above statements from the documentary might be prone to misinterpretation. An attempt is made herein, to posit a broader context for those statements than the restrictive format of a

documentary for general public release would normally allow. An investigation into the documentary's suppressed themes will surely enhance the faithful reader's conception of Prabhupada Srila Sarasvati Thakura and his mission.

For the readers' ease, in the following article our writing will be in bold letters; the statements of the documentary will be in italics; the references in the form of quotes, articles and discourses given as the Appreciations and Response to the documentary statements will be in normal text.

Documentary Statement 1

"Unlike other, so-called gurus and siddha-purusas of his time, Sarasvati Thakura did not allow his disciples to discuss the details of Krsna's amorous love with the gopis, although Sarasvati Thakura did indeed have many highly qualified disciples. He was particularly disturbed if he heard of any disciples discussing Rasa-lila."

Appreciation:

Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura began his mission with a healthy, conservative emphasis on the fundamental principles of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings. Documented evidence shows that as his mission unfolded he began to reveal progressively advanced topics, all the while making sure that the foundation, guru-seva and nama-sankirtana, was unshakably grounded. It is not surprising then that we find historical accounts of his wise cautions and prohibitions, most notably recorded in books of selected statements by His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Maharaja, as well as other statements, admittedly fewer in number, encouraging his followers not to remain forever preoccupied with their disqualifications.

The ultimate intention of the acaryas is, of course, not to confuse us but to convince us that the higher topics should never be taken lightly, cheaply or independently. Rather, they should be received with nothing less than the utmost respect. As Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada has clearly remarked (Dec. 24, 1969), caution is one thing but "it is not that we have taken a vow to boycott the gopis."

A. Srila Sarasvati Thakura supported proper hearing of Rasa-lila

Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura did not forbid his highly qualified disciples to speak, or to hear Rasa-lila from other bona fide devotees. He must have forbidden beginners, especially from discussing independently. However, he could not have made a blanket statement, prohibiting for all time his disciples in general from hearing appropriately and from the right source.

The following is an excerpt from Srila Sarasvati Thakura's lecture, delivered at Radha-kunda during Vraja-mandala parikrama in 1932. The lecture was printed in "The Gaudiya" in 1934. In that lecture he gave these orders:

"All these days we have not spoken about lila. But this is our most confidential asset. This is our only sadhya (perfection). One should not make the mistake of thinking that anartha-nivrtti (overcoming impediments such as lust and greed) is the prayojana (goal of life). One thinking like this will never enter into artha-pravrtti (acquiring one's actual need). For this reason, I will now begin speaking about asta-kaliya-lila.

"I know that you are not ready to hear it, but we should know that such a transcendental ideal exists within the realm of devotion. Beyond the realm of anartha-nivrtti is artha-pravrtti, pure conjugal service to Radha and Krsna. This is transcendental reality. If we do not know of this transcendental

realm, all of our efforts may end in nirvisesa-vada (impersonalism). Do not let your day pass in simply trying for anartha-nivrtti. Artha-pravrtti is also necessary. Anartha-nivrtti is necessary until artha-pravrtti has started. When artha-pravrtti is present, anartha-nivrtti becomes unimportant and artha-pravrtti becomes prominent.

"Those who have chanted harinama 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-katha, na kahibe jathatatha.' One should not reveal one's bhajana to others.' If we disregard this instruction of our previous acaryas, there may be a permanent fall from the realm of devotional service.

"By removing the clothes of the gopis, Lord Sri Krsna obtained happiness; this is Sri Krsna's sense gratification. Suppose one asks, 'Why is He a sense enjoyer? Let us see Him display the behavior of controlling the senses.' We cannot ask this, because Krsna is not a slave to our desires. By His own will He can show us sense restraint – and He did show it in His form as Gaurasundara. By this pastime, Sri Krsna is informing us that no one has the right to remove the clothes of the gopis except Him.

"Our duty is to cultivate devotional service. Do not think that asta-kaliya-lila smaranam is the property of the sahajiyas. Actually it is our affair. We must retrieve it from the hands of the sahajiyas. Our Sri Gurupada-padma heard these things from Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura. That is why he used to tell us various confidential things."

Hankering for Perfection

The following is an article translated for "The Harmonist" magazine (2005) from the weekly "Gaudiya", Vol. 11, No. 14 (November 12, 1932):

"In 1932 in the month of Kartika, the Gaudiya Matha organized Vraja-mandala Parikrama, spanning eighty-four krosas, under the leadership of Om Visnupada Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada. Thousands of devotees from all parts of India participated. The first day of the Parikrama saw a grand procession with nagara-sankirtana, as the pilgrims visited the holy places of Mathura. On different days, Srila Prabhupada had his followers sing various songs composed by the liberated mahajanas, great souls. Through these songs, which are full of heart-felt appeal, Srila Prabhupada showed that their example of continuous hankering for perfection (siddhi-lalasa) should be the sole purpose of all aspirants who have attained the stage of anartha-nivrtti, in which unwanted obstacles are cleared. Srila Prabhupada personally selected the following songs by Srila Narottama dasa Thakura for the devotees to sing:

(1)

hari hari! kabe haba vrndavana-vasi
nirakhiba nayane yugala-rupa-rasi

O Sri Hari, when will I be able to live in Vrndavana and be a real Vrajavasi? When will my eyes behold the beautiful forms of the Divine Couple, Sri Radha-Krsna?

(2)

radha-krsna sevon mui jivane marane
tara sthana, tara lila dekho ratri-dine

I shall serve Sri Radha and Sri Krsna in life and in death. I shall behold Their transcendental abode and pastimes night and day.

Prarthana (Song 48)

(3)

hari hari ara kabe palatibe dasa
ei saba kariya bame, aba vrndavana dhame,
ei mane kariyachi asa

O Sri Hari, when will my life change? When will I renounce all worldly affairs and make my way to Sri Vrndavana-dhama? I cherish this hope.
Prarthana (Song 47)

On Srila Prabhupada's direction, the devotees also sang the following songs by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura:

(4)
dekhite dekhite, bhuliba va kabe,
nija-sthula-paricaya
nayane heriba, vraja-pura-sobha,
nitya cid-ananda-maya

When will I see that I have forgotten my gross bodily identity and am beholding the exquisite beauty of Vraja, full of eternal, spiritual bliss and cognizance.

vrsabhanu-pure, janama laiba, yavate vivaha ha'be
vraja-gopi-bhava, haibe svabhava, ana bhava na rahibe

I shall take birth in Vrsabhanu Maharaja's town and will marry in the nearby village of Yavat. My sole disposition and nature will be that of a cowherd maiden.

nija-siddha-deha, nija-siddha-nama, nija-rupa sva vasana
radha-krpa-bale, labhiba va kabe, krsna-prema-prakarana

When will I obtain, by the power of Radha's mercy, my own eternal spiritual body, my own realized name and dress embellishing my real form? And when will I receive initiation into the techniques of expressing divine love for Krsna?

yamuna-salila-aharane giya, bujhibo yugala-rasa
prema-mugdha ha'ye, pagalini-praya, gaiba radhara yasa

As I go to draw water from the Yamuna, I will understand the confidential mellows of Yugala-Kisora's loving affairs. Being captivated by prema, I will sing Sri Radhika's glories just like a madwoman.] **[Only the first verse was presented in the Harmonist article. The rest of the verses were added by us, for the benefit of the readers who may not know the song.]**
Gita-mala (Part 5, Song 2)

(5)
radha-kunda-tata-kunja-kutira
govardhana-parvata, yamuna-tira

A small cottage in a grove on the banks of Radha-kunda, Govardhana Hill, the banks of the Yamuna...
Saranagati (Svikara, Song 4)

(6)
(ami) yamuna-puline, kadamba-kanane,
ki herinu sakhi! aja
(amar) syama vamsi-dhari, mani-mancopari,
kare' lila rasa-rajaa...

O sakhi, what did I see today! In a kadamba grove on the bank of the Yamuna, a beautiful blackish boy holding a flute was standing on a jeweled platform, performing pastimes as Rasaraja, the monarch of all transcendental mellows...
Kalyana-kalpataru (Ami Yamuna Puline)

"At midday on 8 October, at the end of a grand festival with kirtana, Srila Prabhupada began to speak to the assembled devotees in Mathura. On Srila Prabhupada's instruction, Srimad Bhakti Vilasa Gabhasti-nemi Maharaja sang the prayer 'Hari Hari Ara Kabe Palatibe Dasa' from Srila Narottama dasa Thakura Mahasaya's collection of poems called Prarthana. At that time, Sri Devaprasada Sarvadhikari, former Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, arrived and, after paying his regards to Srila Prabhupada, sat down amidst the gathering. Srila Prabhupada proceeded to explain this prayer of Thakura Mahasaya, one line at a time..."

B. He wanted his highly qualified disciples to inform the world about Rasa-lila in an appropriate way

Srila Sarasvati Thakura certainly forbade some beginners from hearing about Rasa-lila, but his order could not have been for all devotees. For example, one of his most renowned disciples is our diksa-guru, Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. Our Srila Prabhupada is glorified by the documentary's narrator, as well as in many of the interviews in the documentary, as a pure devotee and perhaps the greatest instrument of Srila Sarasvati Thakura in spreading pure Krsna consciousness all over the world. If it were not for our Srila Prabhupada, most of the world outside India (and even in many places in India) would not even know the name, what to speak of the glories, of Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura.

Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja wrote a summary study of the Tenth Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam, called "Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead." In that summary-study there are six chapters concerning the amorous pastimes of Sri Sri Radha and Krsna, including the Rasa-lila chapters. On our Srila Prabhupada's order, the Krsna book was distributed in many languages to millions of fallen conditioned souls, and so many of them became devotees of Lord Krsna.

It could not have been a fact that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada prohibited our Guru Maharaja from discussing Rasa-lila with his peers, or with those of his choice. The pure devotees' choice is the choice of Sri Krsna Himself.

C. His most renowned preacher supports appropriate hearing of Rasa-lila

The following are some quotes from Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja's translations and purports of Srimad-Bhagavatam and Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, as well as from his other books. The essence of his statements is that one should hear rasa-katha from proper authority – not from mayavadis, sahajiyas or professional reciters. One should not imitate the Lord's pastimes or think oneself artificially advanced or perfect, but one should respectfully hear from authority. Regarding hearing Rasa-lila, he writes:

"Discussion of the Rasa-lila among people in general is not recommended because they are affected by the Mayavada philosophy, but if one who is advanced explains and people hear from him, certainly the hearers will be gradually elevated to the position of Krsna consciousness and liberated from materially contaminated life....Sukadeva Gosvami concludes this episode of Rasa-lila by pointing out that if a person hears from the right source the pastimes of Krsna, who is Visnu Himself, and the gopis, who are expansions of His energy, then he will be relieved from the most dangerous type of disease, namely lust. In other words, one who actually hears the Rasa-lila will become completely freed from the lusty desire of sex life and elevated to the highest level of spiritual understanding." (Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Chapter 33)

"According to Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the chapters of the Srimad-Bhagavatam describing the Rasa-lila are not meant for ordinary persons; they are meant for liberated persons only. Therefore

these descriptions of the Rasa-lila should not be described to ordinary people. Those who are advanced devotees, liberated from material contamination, can try to understand Krsna's Rasa-lila. One must not try to imagine the Rasa-lila of Radha and Krsna in mundane terms.

"But even though ordinary hearers of Srimad-Bhagavatam do not know the deep significance of Krsna's Rasa-lila, because they hear about Krsna's pastimes they become purified. And if they hear from authorized sources, they will be promoted to the transcendental devotional platform. The disease within the heart is lust, the desire to enjoy, and by hearing from authorized sources about Krsna's pastimes of loving exchanges with the gopis, the deep-rooted lusty desires in the heart will be completely eradicated.

"Unfortunately, most people do not hear the Srimad-Bhagavatam from authoritative sources. They hear only from professional reciters. Therefore they remain materially diseased, full of lusty desires. Some become sahajiya, pretending to be Krsna and Radharani and Her gopi friends. In this way they behave as if they were the supreme enjoyer." (A Second Chance, Chapter 16)

"The conditioned soul should hear the Rasa-lila dance from an authorized spiritual master and be trained by him so that he can understand the whole situation. Thus one can be elevated to the highest standard of spiritual life; otherwise one will be implicated. Material lust is a kind of heart disease, and to cure the material heart disease of the conditioned soul, it is recommended that one should hear, but not from the impersonalist rascals. If one hears from the right sources with right understanding, then his situation will be different." (Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Chapter 33)

"The Lord is so merciful that He Himself descends to take the fallen souls back home to the Kingdom of Godhead, where the erotic principles of Godhead are eternally relished in their real form, distinct from the perverted sexual love so much adored and indulged in by the fallen souls in their diseased condition. The reason the Lord displays the Rasa-lila is essentially to induce all of the fallen souls to give up their diseased morality and religiosity, and to attract them to the kingdom of God to enjoy the reality. A person who actually understands what is Rasa-lila will certainly hate to indulge in mundane sex life." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi-lila 4.30 purport)

"The specific attraction of His pastimes with the gopis should never be misunderstood. The Bhagavatam relates these transcendental pastimes in the Tenth Canto. And in order to reach the position to understand the transcendental nature of Lord Krsna's pastimes with the gopis, the Bhagavatam promotes the student gradually in nine other cantos." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.3.28 purport)

In Sri Caitanya-caritamrta (Adi-lila 4.34) Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami quotes from Srimad-Bhagavatam (10.33.36) on this subject:

anugrahaya bhaktanam manusam deham asthitah
bhajate tadsih krida yah srutva tat-paro bhavet

"Krsna manifests His eternal, human-like form and performs His pastimes to show mercy to the devotees. Having heard such pastimes, one should engage in service to Him."

In his purport to this verse, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada writes the following:

"...The rasa dance is arranged by Krsna's internal potency yogamaya, and it is beyond the grasp of the materially affected person. Trying to throw mud into transcendence with their perversity, the sahajiyas misinterpret the sayings tat-paratvena nirmalam and tat-paro bhavet. By misinterpreting tadsih kridah, they want to indulge in sex while pretending to imitate Lord Krsna. But one must actually understand the imports of the words through the intelligence of the authorized Gosvamis. Srila Narottama dasa Thakura, in his prayers to the Gosvamis, has explained his inability to understand such spiritual affairs:

rupa-raghunatha-pade hoibe akuti
kabe hama bujhabo se yugala-piriti

"When I shall be eager to understand the literature given by the Gosvamis, then I shall be able to understand the transcendental love affairs of Radha and Krsna."

"In other words, unless one is trained under the disciplic succession of the Gosvamis, one cannot understand Radha and Krsna..." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi-lila 4.34, Purport)

In the above purport, Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada writes that one must hear these transcendental subjects, but not from those who will misinterpret. He translates the next verse, as follows:

"Here the use of the verb 'bhavet,' which is in the imperative mood, tells us that this certainly must be done. Noncompliance would be abandonment of duty." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi-lila 4.35, Purport)

D. He taught: Do hear; don't imitate

Srila Sarasvati Thakura is a pure follower of his predecessor acaryas. His view is exactly the same as theirs. He would therefore not contradict their words and make a blanket statement saying not to hear rasa-katha. Rather, he would make a blanket statement not to imitate. His disciple, our Srila Prabhupada, writes:

"One should not be misled by mental concoctions, supposing his material body to be perfect and deeming oneself a sakhi. This is something like ahangrahopasana, that is, a Mayavadi's worship of his own body as the Supreme. Srila Jiva Gosvami has cautioned mundaners to abstain from such conceptions. He also warns that thinking oneself one of the associates of the Supreme without following in the footsteps of the gopis is as offensive as thinking oneself the Supreme. Such thinking is an aparadha. One has to practice living in Vrndavana by hearing about the talks of the gopis with Krsna. However, one should not consider himself a gopi, for this is offensive." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Madhya-lila 8.204-5 purport)

Srila Sukadeva Gosvami told Maharaja Pariksit (Srimad-Bhagavatam 10.33.30):

naitat samacarej jatu manasapi hy anisvarah
vinasyaty acaran maudhyad yatha 'rudro 'bdhijam visam

"In other words, those who are not isvara, the Supreme Lord, who are powerless and subjected to karma, should never imitate the Lord's pastimes even within their minds. If anyone foolishly imitates Lord Siva by drinking the poison generated from the ocean, he will certainly be destroyed."

In the Introduction to his translation and commentary of Venu-gita, Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja summarizes the commentaries of Srila Jiva Gosvami and Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, as follows:

"The gist of Srila Jiva Gosvami's and Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura's commentaries on this verse is that living entities who are subservient to the material body and who are anisvara – bereft of the controlling potency of the Supreme Lord – should never behave in such a way even within their minds. What to speak of actually performing such activities, one should not even desire to do so. In other words, such acts performed by God in transgression of religious codes should not be contemplated even within the mind..."

"Here in this verse, imitation of such behavior has been prohibited, yet in the verse to come (Srimad-Bhagavatam 10.33.36.) – Yah srutva tat-paro bhavet – it is evident that not only devotees but even others who faithfully hear these pastimes will become fully devoted to the Supreme Lord. This has been further explained in the verse from Srimad-Bhagavatam (10.33.39)."

E. His authorities comment on hearing Rasa-lila

Srila Jiva Gosvami, who is one of the worshipful siksa-gurus of Srila Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada, comments in his Vaisnava Tosani on the above-mentioned Srimad-Bhagavatam verse about Rasa-lila (10.33.36):

"The words anugrahaya bhaktanam manusam deham asthitah indicate that the Supreme Lord Sri Krsna appears in His original human-like form and performs various pastimes in order to bestow favor upon His devotees.

"Sri Krsna manifests all these pastimes to benefit the devotees. By so doing, even ordinary persons (other than the devotees) who hear even the more common of the Lord's pastimes become fully intent upon the Lord. Therefore, by hearing the supremely ambrosial Rasa-lila, ordinary persons will certainly become exclusively devoted to the Lord – of this there can be no doubt. This fact will be elaborately discussed in subsequent verses such as vikriditam vraja-vadhubhir idam ca visnoh (Srimad-Bhagavatam 10.33.39).

"The words manusam deham asthitah may also indicate that those jivas who have attained the human form of life are able to hear all these pastimes, and thus they become exclusively devoted to the Supreme Lord. This is so because the Lord incarnates exclusively on the earthly planets (martya-loka), and it is here only that worship of the Lord takes on its predominant form. Consequently, the human beings residing on the earthly planets may easily hear these narrations of the Lord's pastimes.

"The word bhaktanam appears in this verse. But in some other editions, the word bhutanam is found in its place. In that case, the purport would be as follows: the Lord incarnates only for the sake of the devotees. As a result, the devotees are the root cause of the Lord's appearance. The Lord also appears in His original human-like form in order to bestow His favor upon the liberated souls (muktas), the aspirants for liberation (mumuksus), sense enjoyers (visayis), and all living entities in accordance with their relationship with the devotees.

"The Lord's compassion is therefore said to be the cause of His appearance. Nevertheless, it must be understood that the Lord's favor toward other living entities is due only to their relationship with His devotees. In other words, the Lord bestows favor upon jivas only because of their connection with devotees." (Venu-gita, Introduction, Srila Narayana Maharaja)

Regarding the same verse (10.33.36) beginning 'anugrahaya bhaktanam', Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura – also the worshipful siksa-guru of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura – has commented:

"The Lord performs varieties of pastimes to show favor to His devotees. Having adopted the human form of life, living entities who hear these pastimes become exclusively devoted unto the Lord. In other words, they develop firm faith in hearing the narrations of the Lord's activities. What more shall I say about the importance of hearing lila-katha?

"And this Rasa-lila, being fully imbued with madhurya-rasa, is eminently distinguished even from the Lord's other pastimes. Like a jewel, a mantra, or a powerful medicine, this Rasa-lila is endowed with such indisputable, astonishing potency that by hearing it, all persons in the human form become devoted to the Supreme Lord. Therefore all varieties of devotees who hear the descriptions of these pastimes will be successful and obtain supreme pleasure. Can there be any question of doubt in this regard?" (Venu-gita, Introduction, Srila Narayana Maharaja)

F. Srila Sukadeva Gosvami supports hearing Rasa-lila

Srila Sukadeva Gosvami tells King Pariksit:

vikriditam vraja-vadhubhir idam ca visnoh
sraddhanvito 'nusrnuyad atha varnayed yah
bhaktim param bhagavati pratilabhya kamam
hrd-rogam asv apahinoty acirena dhirah

"A transcendently sober person who, with faith and love continuously hears from a realized soul about the activities of Lord Krsna in His rasa dance with the gopis, or one who describes such activities, can attain full transcendental devotional service at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thus lusty material desires, which are the heart disease of all materialistic persons, are for him quickly and completely vanquished." (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 10.33.39)

Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja comments on this verse:

"But actually, sastra says if one hears Rasa-lila, then lusty desires will be finished: vikriditam idam ca visnoh vraja-vadhubhir...hrd-rogam asv apahinoty acirena dhirah. That is the result. If one actually hears from the right source, then this lusty desire of sex life will be finished. No more." (Room Conversation, Vrndavana, September 11, 1974)

Srila Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada is the faithful follower of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura. Srila Cakravarti Thakura writes in his Srimad-Bhagavatam commentary on this same verse:

"...ktva pratyayena hrd-rogavaty apy adhikarini pratham ataeva premnah pravesas tatas tat prabhavenaivacirato hrd roga nasa iti premayam jnana yoga iva na durlabha paratantras ceti bhavah....

"...The suffix ktva has been used in the formation of the verb pratilabhya (obtained) as follows: prati + labh + ktva. According to the rules of Sanskrit grammar, when the suffix ktva is applied to a verbal root with a prefix, it is replaced by yap. Then the letter 'p' is dropped and thus the final form of the word 'pratilabhya' is obtained. The suffix ktva is applied to the first of the two verbs performed by the same agent to show successive action (i.e., having attained prema he relinquishes all lusty desires in the heart). In this case the first action is pratilabhya (the attainment of prema) and the second action is apahinoti (renunciation of lusty desires of the heart).

"Therefore the suffix ktva in the verb pratilabhya indicates that although lust and other evils still remain within the heart, prema-bhakti first enters the heart and, by its extraordinary influence, destroys all vices to the root. In other words, hearing and reciting Rasa-lila possesses such astonishing power that the lust in the heart of the faithful sadhaka is destroyed and he attains prema. Though these two take place simultaneously, the influence of prema manifests first, and through its effect, all lusty desires of the heart are dissipated.

"Thus, as a result of hearing and chanting the narrations of the Lord's pastimes, one first attains prema for the Lord's lotus feet and thereafter one's heart is liberated from lusty desires and all other contamination. In other words he becomes perfectly pure, because prema is not feeble like the process of jnana and yoga. Bhakti is omnipotent and supremely independent." (Venu-gita, Introduction, Srila Narayana Maharaja)

Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada states that the listener can be bona fide, even with lusty desires still in his heart:

"If a bona fide listener hears of Krsna's pastimes with the gopis, which seem to be lusty affairs, the lusty desires in his heart, which constitute the heart disease of the conditioned soul, will be vanquished, and he will become a most exalted devotee of the Lord." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.1.30 purport)

Our Srila Prabhupada does not state that one who has anarthas should not hear. Rather, he states that one should not hear from mayavadis and professional reciters:

"And bhaktim param bhagavati pratilabhya kama. This is the result. Not that after hearing Rasa-lila, 'Oh, let me imitate. Let me also dance with young girls and enjoy.' This is going on. Rascal mayavadis they do that. Perhaps you know. There are so many instances. But actually, the result will be this hrd-rogam kamam acirena dhirah. No more desire." (Lecture, Srimad-Bhagavatam 5.5.9, Vrndavana, October 31, 1976)

"The pleasure potency is called Srimati Radharani. The attraction of loving affairs on the basis of sex feeling is the original feature of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We, the conditioned souls, being part and parcel of the Supreme, have such feelings also, but they are experienced in a perverted minute condition. Therefore, when those who are after sex-life in this material world hear about Krsna's pastimes with the gopis, they will relish transcendental pleasure although it appears to be materialistic. The advantage will be that they will gradually be elevated to the spiritual platform. In the Bhagavatam it is stated that if one hears the pastimes of Lord Krsna with the gopis from authorities, with submission, then he will be promoted to the platform of transcendental loving service to the Lord, and the material disease of lust within his heart will be completely vanquished. In other words, such hearing will counteract material sex-life." (Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Introduction)

G. Atheists do not believe in Srila Sukadeva Gosvami's verse

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura further discusses the above verse beginning "vikriditam vraja-vadhubhir" (SB 3.33.39), concentrating on the last word, dhira:

"The word dhira means pandita, or one who is learned in the sastra. One who refuses to accept the claim of this verse and thinks, 'As long as the disease of lust remains in the heart, prema cannot be obtained,' is said to possess an atheistic temperament. One who is free from such a foolish, atheistic demeanor is known as pandita or sober person (dhira). Consequently, only those who have firm faith in the sastra are known as dhira. Those who have no faith in the statements of the sastra are atheistic and offenders to the holy name. Such persons can never attain prema.

"Therefore, only faithful sadhakas with firm belief in the statements of sastra, Guru and Vaisnavas are eligible to hear the lila-katha of Srimad-Bhagavatam, which is saturated with rasa. And conversely, those who believe that only sadhakas who are completely free from all anarthas are eligible to hear the above-mentioned pastimes, will neither become free from anarthas nor obtain eligibility to hear – even after millions of births." (Venu-gita, Introduction, Srila Narayana Maharaja)

Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja comments as follows in the Introduction to his translation of Venu-gita:

"Consequently, in the heart of the sadhakas who firmly believe in the statements of the sastra, faith arises by hearing Rasa-lila and other narrations. Only in the hearts of such faithful devotees does prema manifest its influence as a result of hearing lila-katha. Thereafter, lust and all evils present within the heart of the devotees are destroyed to the root."

H. All Gaudiya Vaisnavas believe in this verse

The Introduction continues:

"....Another point to consider is that if this argument is accepted (that one has to be free of anarthas before hearing lila-katha), then we sadhakas who are still affected by anarthas, although possessing faith, could never read nor hear the sacred books of rasika Gaudiya Vaisnava acaryas like Srila Sanatana Gosvami, Srila Rupa Gosvami, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura and Srila

Bhaktivinoda Thakura. Under such a circumstance, we would be forever deprived of the extremely confidential and elevated truths of bhakti expressed by these acaryas. There would be no possibility that the sprout of greed for raganuga-bhakti would ever be awakened in our hearts. Thus we would be forever cheated from that which was not previously given, the prema-rasa of the most munificent Sri Sacinandana, the bestower of krsna-prema. What then would distinguish the Sri Gaudiya Vaisnavas who have taken shelter of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu from Vaisnavas of other sampradayas?"

Self-realized Gurus are the asraya-vigraha manifestations of Lord Krsna Himself. Therefore they have the power and right to know to whom to speak. In 1968, in Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's lecture to relatively new devotees on the appearance day of Srimati Radharani, he spoke about the Lord's pleasure potency:

"So we have described about the Radha-Krsna loving affairs in our Teachings of Lord Caitanya in page 264. If you have got this book, you can read it, how the reciprocation of loving affairs of Radha-Krsna is there, transcendental."

I. Who will say not to hear?

The following is an excerpt from a lecture given by Srila Narayana Maharaja in Wales, in July of 2000:

"There are four ways to tell others not to read Tenth Canto. The first is in ignorance. Elevated and high-class devotees know all the reasons why Caitanya Mahaprabhu descended to this world. Do you know why He came? If you are not reading and hearing the Tenth Canto Srimad-Bhagavatam you cannot know. You will be cheated of this knowledge. So you should try to hear Srimad-Bhagavatam from elevated Vaisnavas. Do not think, as some devotees may tell you, that we should not read the Tenth Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam.

"Good devotees know everything, and they may tell you in the second way: 'You should begin from the First Canto, then the Second, the Third, Fourth, Fifth, and thus you can go there.'

"The third way is to cleverly create curiosity. How will they do so? They will say: 'What is in my hands? Can you tell me what I have in my hands?' Others then become curious to know. If anyone tells you: 'Do not read the Tenth Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam!' this curiosity may come automatically: 'What is there? I should know that!' In order to increase others' curiosity to hear and read Srimad-Bhagavatam, devotees speak like this.

"In the fourth way the speaker is speaking exactly the opposite of what he means. When Srila Rupa Gosvami writes, 'Don't go to the banks of the Jamuna where Govinda is sweetly playing on His flute, because then you'll forget all about your society, friendship and love,' he means, 'Do go.' For all these reasons, devotees tell these things.

"There was a devotee in my village who used to go to the Ganges river to take bath daily. Whenever someone came and called out to him, 'Rama! Rama!' he acted like he was furious. Taking his stick, he looked like he wanted to beat that person. Why did he do so? And why did all the boys from all the villages call out to him in this way? Whenever they said, 'Rama! Rama!' he would pretend to beat them. Why did he do so? In order to make them chant, 'Rama! Rama!' It was a kind of fun for them.

"If anyone is telling that you should not read the Srimad-Bhagavatam, there should be a curiosity to know what is inside: 'There *must* be some jewel there.'

"Without hearing and reading, especially without hearing the Tenth Canto Srimad-Bhagavatam, you cannot decide the aim and object of your devotional life. On the other hand, by hearing the Tenth Canto, greed may come to attain that object."

Documentary Statement 2

"Sarasvati Thakura also did not allow his disciples to read such books as Gita-govinda, Ujjvala-nilamani or Govinda-lilamrta."

Appreciation:

Srila Prabhupada Sarasvati Thakura strongly opposed the independent trespassing of unqualified candidates into our sampradaya's sacred treasures such as Gita-govinda, Ujjvala-nilamani and Govinda-lilamrta. In this regard, we find a consensus between all authentic acaryas. The subject of eligibility has been addressed elaborately by Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja in his introduction to Gita-govinda (see section C below). Therein he stresses that this book is not suitable or even understandable for everyone.

However, to postulate that an acarya would banish all of his followers forever from their spiritual inheritance is obviously a misinterpretation.

A. Srila Sarasvati Thakura preached Gita-govinda's glory

The following discourse on Sri Gita-govinda was delivered in 1932, on the eve of the 446th commemoration of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance. This discourse was later used in the Foreword of Srila Narayana Maharaja's translation and commentary of the Gita-govinda. Herein is an excerpt from that discourse in the Foreword:

"Sri Jayadeva Gosvami, the court poet of the Sena dynasty, has welcomed the appearance of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in the auspicious invocation of Sri Gita-govinda (1.1):

'O Radha, all directions are covered by dense and ominous clouds. The forest floor has been cast into darkness by the shadows of blackish tamala trees. Krsna is naturally timid. He cannot be alone at night, so take Him home with You.' Sri Radha turned Her face towards the bower of desire trees beside the forest path and, bewildered by intense joy, She honored the words of her friend. When She arrived on the bank of the Yamuna River, She initiated her love-play in a secret place.

May the sweetness of this confidential pastime of the Divine Couple be victorious by manifesting in the hearts of the devotees.

"Sri Pujari Gosvami's commentary on the above verse does not disclose the picture in its entirety. Here, Sri Jayadeva Gosvami has also revealed Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to the hearts of highly advanced devotees. The poet hints at the appearance of Sri Radha-Krsna in one chamber of the great Yogapitha of Sridhama Mayapura; and simultaneously, at the appearance of the combination of Their bodies as the independent form of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu."

B. He wanted the world to properly understand sacred amour

The following writing of Srila Sarasvati Thakura is excerpted from an article that graces the Foreword of Srila Narayana Maharaja's translation and commentary of Sri Gita-govinda. The publishers of Srila Narayana Maharaja's edition had taken that writing from chapter 14 of "Sri Caitanya's Teachings", a compilation of Srila Sarasvati Thakura's articles, and it is a beautiful glorification of Srila Jayadeva Gosvami's work. In the Foreword, the writing is entitled "On Eroticism – Sacred & Profane":

"The sexual principle is a misunderstood symbol of Reality. It can no more be banished from our consciousness than consciousness itself. The male and female forms are also not the sole and distinctive possessions of this world. There is Reality behind them as well. The soul has a body which is symbolized by the female form and which is absolutely free from any unwholesome material association.

"The ascetic's repugnance to the female form prevents an unprejudiced examination of the female sex that is a necessary factor of our conception of amorous love. This amorous love is the highest subject of human poetry and the most powerful factor in all human activities. Its worthlessness is not established by refusing to recognize it as a part of our nature. It would be much more to the purpose to try to understand what it really is. The Srimad-Bhagavatam is the only book that answers this all-important question.

"The worship of Sri Radha-Krsna is held by some modern thinkers to be dangerous, and even immoral. They apparently take exception to the erotic element, which is the prominent aspect of the highest worship of Sri Radha-Krsna.

"Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu teaches us that it is obligatory for everyone to pay homage to spiritual amour that characterizes the highest service of the Divine Person. This is the central topic of Srimad-Bhagavatam, which deals with the transcendental service of the Personal Absolute.

"Spiritual amour is the highest service to Divinity in His most complete manifestation. The real Nature of Divine Personality can never be fully understood by those who are unable to appreciate the pre-eminent excellence of His service by amorous love.

"...The Personality of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is identical with and yet distinct from Sri Krsna. The Activities of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu are, therefore, also identical with and yet distinct from the Amorous Pastimes of Sri Krsna. The Activities of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu appear in the form capable of being received by the conditioned soul without any chance of muddling by his conditioned judgment.

"The perfect chant of the Name of Krsna is available to all souls, and it is identical with the amorous service of the spiritual milkmaids of Vraja. This is the sum and substance of the teachings of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Conversely, those who do not perform the congregational chant of the name of Krsna in the manner that is free from offence are not in a position to realize the nature of Divine amour. Those who miss such realization remain subject to the abject slavery of mundane lust.

"Sri Radhika is not specifically mentioned in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. But in the description of the Circular Amorous Dance, the rasa pastimes, Sri Krsna is represented as leaving the circle of the dancing milkmaids in the company of a female who is more favored than all the rest. The milkmaids who were thus abruptly abandoned in the very midst of the dance praised the genuine devotion of the unnamed female who could induce Sri Krsna to prefer Her sole company to the combined attractions of all the others.

"But although the Srimad-Bhagavatam mentions the above incident, the subject is not further developed in that work. This has been explained by the Gosvamis of Vrndavana, the apostles of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, as due to a deliberate resolve on the part of Sri Sukadeva, who is the narrator of the Srimad-Bhagavatam, to avoid disclosing to his miscellaneous audience the 'hidden matters' of the scriptures. The 'hidden matters' can only be known by the special grace of Sri Krsna and not otherwise. They are not to be divulged to all persons indiscriminately.

"This explanation offered by the Gosvamis is not opposed to the open treatment of the same subject by Sri Jayadeva Gosvami and other writers. In spite of the Sri Gita-govinda and its companion works, the subject of the relationship of Sri Radhika to Sri Krsna remains shrouded in impenetrable mystery. No language can convey to the lay reader anything but a misleading idea of the nature of the subject on which Sri Sukadeva maintained such discreet silence. This result is hailed with unmistakable joy by Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, author of Sri Caitanya-caritamrta. Kaviraja Gosvami pertinently observes that no joy can excel that of the narrator of the hidden subject when he realizes that unqualified persons are wholly and automatically barred from all knowledge of the subject.

"Sri Sukadeva's hesitation to divulge the secrets of the Vedas is well founded. The conduct of Sri Jayadeva Gosvami in speaking without reserve is equally in order, if we remember that his book cannot be understood at all by those who are lacking in the highest spiritual culture.

C. From the Introduction to Srila Narayana Maharaja's translation and commentary of Sri Gita-govinda

Eligibility for reading Gita-govinda

"To read a great literary work and understand it in terms of etymology is one type of experience, but to appreciate the profound sentiments by which one is truly acquainted with the work is a different experience entirely. Comprehension of the literal meaning of words is generally a simple affair, whereas assimilation of their underlying emotional significance is not so easy. It is impossible for one who is not qualified to read a particular text to accept its internal mood (bhavartha). Therefore all ancient scriptures traditionally begin by defining the specific parameters of eligibility for their prospective readers.

"Some deeply realized authors have strictly forbidden unqualified persons to study their compositions and have even pronounced curses upon those who might dare to delve into subjects beyond their comprehension. What is the need for such strict prohibitions? The necessity arises because unqualified persons who read esoteric texts inevitably misinterpret them. Thereby, potential benefits are replaced by ill effects upon themselves and others.

"The revered Jayadeva Gosvami has clarified the subject of eligibility in his auspicious invocation: 'If your heart yearns to delight in remembrance of Sri Hari; if you are hankering to contemplate upon Him with intense affection; if you are overwhelmed with curiosity to know about His skill in amorous pastimes – then by all means read this book. You will find my lovely poetry to be extremely relishable. Although it is so emotive and mellifluous, if you are not possessed of the aforementioned qualifications, then you must not read it. This literature is not for you.'

"Although Sri Jayadeva clearly addresses the issue of eligibility, the unqualified sector of society fails to understand him and goes on reading this poem with enthusiasm for its charming linguistic embellishments. However, impelled by their inability to grasp its real significance, they finally resort to insulting the crest jewel of poets, Sri Jayadeva, as if his composition were something crude. And so they must, for they do not recognize the divinity of Sri Hari. They are not even inclined to approach the precincts of sweet contemplation upon Him. They remain confined to their experience of misidentifying themselves with the physical body and considering sensual gratification to be the utmost limit of happiness. What can such slaves to lust ever understand about the affairs of transcendental love described by Sri Jayadeva Gosvami?

"The revered Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja has stated in Sri Caitanya-caritamrta (Adi-lila 4.164–66): 'The characteristics of worldly lust and transcendental love are completely different. If mundane lust is likened to iron, then spiritual love can be likened to gold. The desire to give satisfaction to one's own senses is called lust. However, the desire to satisfy the senses of Sri Krsna is called pure love, or prema. The goal of lust is one's own enjoyment, whereas the purpose of love is to please Sri Krsna. Such prema is immensely powerful.

"How many people can understand the depth of Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja's words? Those who are continuously absorbed in gratifying their senses are especially disqualified. For them, the supramundane loving pastimes of Sri Radha-Krsna are nothing but the play of lusty desires. If they could love someone to the point of completely abandoning all social customs, Vedic religious injunctions and bodily connections, as Sri Radhika and Her friends have done, then one day they might also have some idea about the principles underlying these pastimes. Only after making such a sacrifice is it possible to understand that unselfish prema can be expressed only by those who do not cherish even the slightest ambition for their own happiness.

"The Vaisnava poets take up their pens simply for the sake of instructing us about the glories of self-effacing, transcendental love. The lion amongst poets, Sri Jayadeva, has also taken up his pen to show how the Absolute Reality Sri Krsna is controlled by unmotivated prema. He is always ready to fall at the feet of any devotee in whom He detects even the fragrance of such affection and humbly requests, *dehi pada-pallavam udaram – 'Mercifully bestow upon Me the soft petals of Your lotus feet.'* (Sri Gita-govinda 10.8).'

"On realizing this, Sri Jayadeva Gosvami was greatly perturbed. 'How can I make these words come from the mouth of Sri Krsna, the supreme controller of unlimited millions of universes?' Many times he asked himself, 'Should I write such a thing?' and many times he decided, 'Yes, I should.' But even though he wanted to do it, he could not bring himself to write this line. He conceived of Sri Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead; therefore the reverential mood checked his pen. However, the Supreme Lord is always affectionate to his devotees. Assuming the guise of Sri Jayadeva, He completed the line by writing dehi pada-pallavam udaram in golden letters with His own hand. Thus Sri Krsna made a resounding announcement, as if by the ubiquitous beating of kettledrums, to loudly proclaim His love for his devotees.

"...Even amongst these great compositions, the excellence of Jayadeva Gosvami's Sri Gita-govinda is unsurpassed.

"...The pastimes of Radhika and Krsna are the transcendental loving play of the Omnipotent Divinity and His potency (Saktiman and Sakti). They have the power to sanctify the whole world because they are completely free from even the slightest trace of lust. One should make a diligent study of these pastimes, as such study constitutes one of the limbs of bhakti-yoga. Although many devotees are conversant with this conclusion, Sri Gita-govinda remains inaccessible to them because they are not sufficiently acquainted with the Sanskrit language and its implications. This present edition will provide them with sufficient help to understand the meaning of the words and the emotions implied therein.

"...Sri Gita-govinda is the very essence of all the Vedas and Sri Jayadeva Gosvami is the superlative devotional practitioner (sadhaka) and perfected spiritualist (siddha), with complete mastery of all Vedic wisdom.

"The readers of Sri Gita-govinda will see that the author has remembered his worshipful Deity from the very beginning of his auspicious invocation: 'radha-madhavayor jayanti yamuna-kule rahah-kelayah. The inscrutable, secret pleasure pastimes of Sri Radha-Madhava on the banks of Yamuna reign above all.'

"...Svayam Bhagavan Sri Krsna has instructed His intimate devotee, Arjuna, about the eligibility and ineligibility to hear and speak Srimad Bhagavad-gita in its eighteenth chapter, verses 67 and 68: 'Do not speak about this confidential knowledge and realization to those unqualified persons who have no faith and who are not engaged in pure devotion to Me. One who explains the supreme mystery of my Gita to the faithful devotees is sure to attain pure devotion and in the end he will come to Me.'

"In these verses, Sri Krsna describes the characteristics of the genuine candidates for transcendental realization after first defining the disqualifications. Sri Jiva Gosvami has also presented a clear analysis of the qualifications for hearing his Gopala-campu. He has pronounced a curse upon faithless non-devotees who still insist upon reading it. Similarly, Sri Sanatana Gosvami has strictly forbidden faithless persons to hear or read his Brhad-bhagavatamrta. Other Gosvamis have also pronounced curses to prohibit the unqualified from delving into their literatures."

The Substance of Sri Gita-govinda

"Sri Jayadeva Gosvami thoroughly understood the nature of mankind in this present age of dissention (Kali-yuga). He knew how easily they become bewildered by the sight of superficial beauty. If they do not see an external covering of beauty, they can overlook a potent medicinal herb, thinking it to be of no value.

"...Therefore, although Sri Gita-govinda is a poetic composition, it is simultaneously the embodiment of the essence of all the Vedas. Sri Jayadeva Gosvami is compared to the sacred decorative marking (tilaka) upon the forehead of the entire dynasty of poets who are conversant with the principles of spiritual mellows."

Practical Realization of Sri Gita-govinda

"It is not by chance that Sri Jayadeva Gosvami has employed a female confidante (sakhi) in the role of a mediator to arrange Krsna's meetings with Radha. The purport is clear. Unless one is

under the personal guidance of such a sakhi and until one attains the help of the sakhis, one cannot attain Sri Krsna. All devotional scriptures proclaim this conclusion. The help of a sakhi and the help of Guru are one and the same. To be Guru one must take shelter of the disposition of the sakhis, and to attain Sri Krsna one must accept the shelter of a spiritual master who is perfectly situated in the transcendental mood of a sakhi. Herein lies the essential message of the Vedas:

tasmad gurum prapadyeta
jijnasuh sreya uttamam
sabde pare ca nisnatam
brahmany upasamasrayam
(Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.3.21)

"To know the Absolute Truth, one must take shelter of a perfect Guru who is fixed in devotion to the Absolute.' When Sri Suta Gosvami began to narrate Srimad-Bhagavatam in the sacred forest of Naimisaranya, he called it the essence of the Vedas; and the essence of Srimad-Bhagavatam itself is the Rasa-lila. Sri Jayadeva Gosvami has the ability to comprehend the essence of everything. Therefore he condensed the Rasa-lila even further, just as one might perform the impossible feat of confining the ocean within a jar. He was compelled by compassion to manifest the nectar of immortality in the form of this poem for the upliftment of all living beings in this age of Kali. In answer to the inquiries of Pariksit Maharaja, Sri Sukadeva Gosvami replied:

anugrahaya bhaktanam
manusam deham asthitah
bhajate tadsih krida
yah srutva tat-paro bhavet'
(Srimad-Bhagavatam 10.33.36)

"Sri Krsna performs the Rasa-lila to bestow mercy upon His devotees. Yet the non-devotees are also naturally fond of romance or Srngara-rasa. Therefore, when they hear the Rasa-lila they also gradually become absorbed in thoughts of Sri Krsna. Bhagavan performs apparently erotic pastimes on the surface of the Earth out of compassion for everyone – the devotees and the non-devotees.'

"Maharsi Vedavyasa was moved by compassion to write it down for the benefit of all, and the topmost devotee Sri Sukadeva Gosvami was also moved by compassion to preach it throughout the world. After that, the best of poets, Sri Jayadeva Gosvami, also mercifully reproduced it in the form of an even sweeter poetic composition.

"Now I will tell you about this confidential methodology. The kunja-lila or Rasa-lila of Sri Radha-Krsna is extremely deep. Devotees established in the moods of servitude, friendship and parenthood cannot even perceive it. None of them have eligibility to enter into this pastime – only the sakhis are qualified. This pastime is expanded by the sakhis. Without them it cannot be nourished and only they can taste it. Therefore, there is absolutely no opportunity to enter kunja-lila without taking complete shelter of the sakhis and receiving their help. Only those whose devotional service is to follow the transcendental emotions of the sakhis and remain under their shelter and guidance can attain the kunja-seva of Sri Radha-Krsna. There is no way to attain this objective except for absorption in remembrance of the sakhis while taking complete shelter of their lotus feet.

"Fervently begging for a slight trace of the mercy of Sri Hari, Sri Guru and the Vaisnavas, destitute and worthless,
Tridandibhiksu Sri Bhaktivedanta Narayana."

D. Srila Sarasvati Thakura did not prohibit his faithful disciples

The narrator of the documentary stated, "Sarasvati Thakura also did not allow his disciples to read such books as Gita-govinda, Ujjvala-nilamani or Govinda-lilamrta." Srila

Sarasvati Thakura must certainly have said this for beginners, for neophyte disciples and for general people, but not for all.

In his book "Prakṛta-rasa Aranya Chedini," Sripad Narasingha Maharaja attributes a very similar quote to Parama-pujyapada Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Maharaja. He writes: "From Srila Sridhara Maharaja we once heard that Sarasvati Thakura did not allow his disciples to read (study and discuss) such higher books as Govinda-lilamṛta, Stava-kusamanjali, Ujjvala-nilamani, and even certain portions of Caitanya-caritamṛta wherein the lila of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is discussed. Whenever Sarasvati Thakura heard that someone was reading those books, he took it that an offense was being committed by interfering in the higher lilas."

We will never doubt the words of our worshipable superior Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Maharaja. Srila Sridhara Maharaja must certainly have said this for beginners. His words to them are sanguine and in accord with all our acaryas. But he would never have contradicted Srila Sarasvati Thakura and said this for all his disciples or for all time.

Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada discusses the glories of Sri Gita-govinda in his purports on Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta (Adi-lila 13.42):

"One of his [Srila Jayadeva Gosvami's] famous books is Gita-govinda, which is full of transcendental mellow feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa. The gopis felt separation from Kṛṣṇa before the rasa dance, as mentioned in the Srimad-Bhagavatam, and the Gita-govinda expresses such feelings. There are many commentaries on the Gita-govinda by many Vaisnavas."

Srila Narayana Maharaja commented on Sri Gita-govinda in a lecture in Badger:

"Sri Gita-govinda is a 'jewel book' brought by Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu. We all know that Sri Jayadeva Gosvami has written this beautiful Gita-govinda, but without Mahāprabhu it would have remained locked like a pearl in the oyster shell or a jewel in a locked case. Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu manifested the glories of Sri Gita-govinda. Just as without Srila Rupa Gosvami no one would have known the inner moods of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu, similarly, by Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu relishing the moods of Sri Gita-govinda its glories became manifest for the whole world. I have explained this very high-class philosophy, but only rare devotees in this world can understand it." (May 19, 2003)

How will people come to understand? Srila Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvami was considering whether or not to write Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta – due to the confidential nature of the topics therein. He decided to write, and he commented on his decision in Adi-lila:

"At the time of writing Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta, a doubt arose in the heart of Sri Kṛṣṇa dāsa Kavirāja Gosvami regarding whether he should present the discussion on rasa-vicāra. He questioned whether or not to include this topic in the book, lest ineligible people may read it to their detriment. Finally he resolved to include rasa-vicāra in the book, expressing this in his own words in Caitanya-caritamṛta, Adi-lila (4.231-235):

"The esoteric and confidential conclusions regarding the amorous pastimes of Rāsarāja Sri Kṛṣṇa and the gopis, who are the embodiments of mahābhava, are not fit to be disclosed to the common ordinary man. But if they are not revealed, no one can enter into this topic. I shall therefore describe these topics in a concealed manner, so that only rasika-bhaktas will be able to understand them, whereas ineligible fools will not. Anyone who has established Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Sri Nityānanda Prabhu in their hearts will attain transcendental bliss by hearing these conclusions. This entire doctrine is as sweet as newly grown mango sprouts, which can only be relished by the devotees, who are compared to cuckoos. The camel-like non-devotees cannot possibly gain admittance into these topics. Therefore, there is special jubilation in my heart.'

"It is always inappropriate to reveal confidential vraja-rasa topics before general people. However, there is every possibility that this sacred mystery will disappear if it is not thoroughly explained. Although neem and mango trees may be present together in the same garden, a crow will sit on a neem tree and taste its bitter fruits, whereas the cuckoo, who has discriminating taste, will sit on the mango tree and savor its sweet sprouts and blossoms. Consequently, it is proper to present rasa-vicāra." (Sri Jaiva-Dharma, Preface, Srila Narayana Maharaja)

Verses from Sri Gita-govinda are quoted in Sri Caitanya-caritamrta and translated by Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada:

"In Gita-govinda there is a verse which states that the enemy of Kamsa, Krsna, also wanted to be entangled in love affairs with women and thus simply took Radharani away and left the company of the other damsels of Vraja. Krsna was very much afflicted by Radharani's absence and, being thus mentally distressed, began to search Her out along the banks of the Yamuna. Failing to find Her, He entered the bushes of Vrndavana and began to lament. Ramananda Raya pointed out that when one discusses the purport of these two special verses of Gita-govinda (3.1-2), he can relish the highest nectar of Krsna's and Radha's loving affairs.

"Although there were many gopis to dance with Krsna, Krsna especially wanted to dance with Radharani. In the rasa dance Krsna expanded Himself and placed Himself between every two gopis, but He was especially present with Radharani. However, Radharani was not pleased with Krsna's behavior. As described in Ujjvala-nilamani: 'The path of loving affairs is just like the movement of a snake. Amongst young lovers, there are two kinds of mentality – causeless and causal.' Thus when Radharani left the area of the rasa dance out of anger at not receiving special treatment, Krsna became very sorrowful to see Her absent. The perfection of the rasa dance was considered to be complete due to Radharani's presence, and in Her absence Krsna considered the dance to be disrupted. Therefore He left the arena to search Her out. When He could not find Radharani after wandering in several places, He became very distressed. Thus it is understood that Krsna could not enjoy His pleasure potency even in the midst of all the gopis. But in the presence of Radharani He was satisfied." (Teachings of Lord Caitanya, Chapter 30)

"Krsna is so beautiful, transcendental and attractive that He sometimes attracts even Himself. The following verse appears in Gita-govinda (1.11): 'My dear friend, just see how Krsna is enjoying His transcendental pastimes in the spring by expanding the beauty of His personal body. His soft legs and hands, just like the most beautiful moon, are used on the bodies of the gopis. When He embraces different parts of their bodies, He is so beautiful. Krsna is so beautiful that He attracts even Narayana, as well as the goddess of fortune who associates with Narayana.'" (Teachings of Lord Caitanya, Chapter 31)

"A similar statement can be found in Gita-govinda, wherein it is said that when the enemy of Kamsa, Sri Krsna, embraces Srimati Radharani, He immediately becomes entangled in a loving condition and gives up the company of all other gopis." (Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 44)

"As far as mana, or anger, is concerned, there is the following incident described in Gita-govinda: 'When Srimati Radharani saw Krsna enjoying Himself in the company of several other gopis, She became a little jealous because Her special prestige was being dimmed. Therefore, She immediately left the scene and took shelter in a nice flower bush where the black drones were humming.'" (Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 44)

In addition to translating and purporting the quotes from Sri Gita-govinda in his edition of Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, Srila Prabhupada does the same with the many quotes from Sri Ujjvala-nilamani and Sri Govinda-lilamrta therein. In addition, there is a beautiful book called "In Search for the Ultimate Goal of Life," published and edited by Sripad B.G. Narasingha Maharaja, on the topic of Raya Ramananda Samvada. According to Sripad Narasingha Maharaja's Introduction, this book was written by Srila Prabhupada, and Prabhupada's original manuscript was called "Lord Caitanya: His Sannyasa and Sankirtana Movement." Therein, Prabhupada refers to and purports several statements from Ujjvala-nilamani and Govinda-lilamrta.

Our Srila Prabhupada also quotes his Gurudeva's warning regarding those who are not fit to hear. Kindly note that this is a warning to those who want to imitate and to pretend they are already advanced in raganuga-bhakti. It is a warning for those who don't want to hear

under the guidance of a pure devotee. [This has also been discussed in our Appreciation to Documentary Statement 1 (D), called "Don't imitate; but do hear."]:

"Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura comments in this connection that such feelings of separation as Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu enjoyed from the books of Vidyapati, Candidasa and Jayadeva are especially reserved for persons like Sri Ramananda Raya and Svarupa Damodara, who were paramahansas, men of the topmost perfection, because of their advanced spiritual consciousness. Such topics are not to be discussed by ordinary persons imitating the activities of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. For critical students of mundane poetry and literary men without God consciousness who are after bodily sense gratification, there is no need to read such a high standard of transcendental literature. Persons who are after sense gratification should not try to imitate raganuga devotional service." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi-lila 13.42)

Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja has given the world his translations and purports of Sri Caitanya-caritamrta. Very often he also quotes the commentaries of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura and his Gurudeva, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada.

As previously mentioned, Srila Sridhara Maharaja would never have quoted his Guru Maharaja in a blanket statement for all, or for all time, in saying that he forbade all his disciples to read or discuss "even certain portions of Caitanya-caritamrta wherein the lila of Radha-Krsna are discussed." One point to note is that Srila Sarasvati Thakura himself wrote a commentary on the entirety of Caitanya-caritamrta. Secondly, if this was a blanket statement for all, it would have been an indirect criticism of Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja.

The following is some of our Prabhupada's translations from Caitanya-caritamrta regarding rahasya-lila, Sri Sri Radha-Krsna's confidential pastimes. (Srila Prabhupada also ordered his disciples to translate his books into all languages and to distribute them):

"Rather, they preferred to take the lotus feet of the Lord and place them on their breasts. Sometimes they regretted that their breasts were so hard, fearing that Krsna might not be very pleased to keep His soft lotus feet there." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Madhya-lila 13.136 purport)

"Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, 'O wife of the deer, Lord Krsna has been embracing Srimati Radharani, and the kunkuma powder on Her breasts has mixed with the garland of kunda flowers decorating His body. The fragrance of the garland has scented the entire atmosphere.'" (Caitanya-caritamrta, Antya-lila 15.47)

"The two very beautiful arms of Krsna are just like long bolts. They also resemble the bodies of black snakes that enter the space between the two hill-like breasts of women and bite their hearts. The women then die from the burning poison.' In other words, the gopis become very much agitated by lusty desire; they are burning due to the poisonous bite inflicted by the black snakes of Krsna's beautiful arms." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Antya 15.75 verse and purport)

E. He blessed our Srila Prabhupada

Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja wrote at the very end of his Caitanya-caritamrta commentaries:

"I think that His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura is always seeing my activities and guiding me within my heart by his words. As it is said in Srimad-Bhagavatam, tene brahma hrda ya adi-kavaye. Spiritual inspiration comes from within the heart, wherein the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in His Paramatma feature, is always sitting with all His devotees and associates. It is to be admitted that whatever translation work I have done is through the inspiration of

my spiritual master, because personally I am most insignificant and incompetent to do this materially impossible work.

"I do not think myself a very learned scholar, but I have full faith in the service of my spiritual master, His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. If there is any credit to my activities of translating, it is all due to His Divine Grace. Certainly if His Divine Grace were physically present at this time, it would have been a great occasion for jubilation, but even though he is not physically present, I am confident that he is very much pleased by this work of translation. He was very fond of seeing many books published to spread the Krsna consciousness movement. Therefore our society, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, has been formed to execute the order of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura.

"It is my wish that devotees of Lord Caitanya all over the world enjoy this translation, and I am glad to express my gratitude to the learned men in the Western countries who are so pleased with my work that they are ordering in advance all my books that will be published in the future. On this occasion, therefore, I request my disciples who are determined to help me in this work to continue their cooperation fully, so that philosophers, scholars, religionists and people in general all over the world will benefit by reading our transcendental literatures, such as Srimad-Bhagavatam and Sri Caitanya-caritamrta."

Documentary statement 3

"Sarasvati Thakura's caution was:

*matala hari-jane visaya range
pujala raga patha gaurava bange*

'Always worship the path of raga-marga, spontaneous devotion. Do not rush ahead. Keep yourself a little distant and below. One who transgresses these instructions will be cast down.' That was the motto of Gaudiya Matha."

Appreciation:

It was not mentioned by the documentary narrator, but it is stated on one of Sripad Narasingha Maharaja's websites that this statement is quoted from Srila Sridhara Maharaja's explanation of a poem by Srila Sarasvati Thakura.

Srila Sridhara Maharaja did not intend his statement to be the translation of the verse. His explanation given here focuses on the phrase "pujala raga-patha," indicating that the path of raga is worthy of our worship. The implication of this idea is that one can gain a genuine entrance into raga-marga only by mercy from above. There is no other way.

Such mercy will not descend upon those who proudly think themselves qualified, but upon those who, realizing their ineligibility, humbly worship raga-marga from a lower position.

It goes without saying that in practice it is impossible to worship something that you are absolutely forbidden to hear, speak or read about. So there must also be a preliminary stage before raga-marga proper wherein one is exposed, in a limited capacity, to the tenets of raga-marga. The rate of exposure is to be determined on an individual basis by one's self-realized Guru.

A. Words of Caution by Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja

Self-realized Gurus awaken the utmost respect for Radha-Krsna-lila in the hearts of aspiring devotees by their cautionary statements. At the same time, they create the atmosphere

for a provisional stage of hearing the higher topics, under their guidance and in their service, so that their followers may continue in the right direction. By hearing under such guidance, one develops and increases one's qualification for hearing. The overall effect of cautionary statements along with a tentative exposure to lila katha is realized by the sincere disciple.

In this regard, there is an article written about Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, the sannyasa-guru of Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. The article was written by Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami's disciple, Srila Bhaktivedanta Vamana Gosvami Maharaja who, after his Guru's entrance into nitya-lila in 1968, became the revered Acarya and President of his institution, Sri Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti. Srila Vamana Maharaja writes:

"Srila Gurupadapadma was an ideal Guru, and was expert in krsna-tattva. He forbade followers with anarthas to remember asta-kaliya-lila and imagine their siddha-deha (spiritual form). He particularly attracted the attention of everyone by quoting Jagad-guru Srila Prabhupada's instructive words: 'Smarana will take place by the influence of kirtana, and then it is possible to perform nirjana bhajana.'

"...One day a devotee was studying the commentaries on rasa-lila, bhramara-gita and so on, and Srila Gurudeva said, 'The qualification to hear topics such as rasa-lila will come when sri nama-kirtana has freed the heart from anarthas, and suddha-sattva has appeared there. Otherwise the transcendental pastimes of Sri Radha-Govinda will appear to be the activities of a worldly hero and heroine, and will only give rise to false ideas. The conception of rasa is only possible in the siddha-deha, the perfect state. It is impossible to perceive srngara-rasa in a material body. Only a person who is free from the lower types of enjoyment and is in the stage of bhava is qualified to discuss sambhoga rasa.'"

In this same article, Srila Vamana Maharaja reveals that while Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja warns disciples regarding the eligibility required to approach proper, unadulterated meditation on the Lord's confidential pastimes; he also invites those entrenched in the material world, in a provisional way, to sing about them:

"His ever-fresh and transcendental talent has been illuminated in his songs such as Srila Prabhupada's arati, Sri Tulasi-arati and Mangala-arati. Following the transcendental poet Sri Jayadeva's Gita-govinda, Srila Guru Maharaja's Mangala-arati gives an INTRODUCTION to the supreme and unequalled, sweet transcendental pastimes of Sri Vraja-nava-yuva-dvandva, the eternally youthful Conjugal Couple of Vraja." (Published in the book "Sri Srimad Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami, His Life and Teachings," by Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, in the section called "Srila Gurupadapadma's Supramundane Character and Guru-nistha.")

Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami's Mangala-arati song is a meditation on Sri Sri Radha-Krsna's nisanta-lila, Their confidential, pre-dawn pastimes. The following excerpt from chapter seven of his biography explains one of the verses:

"This prayer causes the auspicious arati of Sri Sri Radha Krsna Yugala to manifest in the heart of the raganuga-sadhaka. Losing external consciousness of his body and this world, he sees with his eternal form 'mayura sukadi sari kata pikaraja mangala jagara hetu kariche viraja' (verse 5). The time of dawn is quickly approaching. In some pleasure grove such as Sanketa, Sri Sri Radha-Krsna Yugala are still asleep, bound by each others' embrace. Afraid that everyone will soon wake up, Vrnda-devi inspires the birds such as peacocks, male and female parrots, cuckoos, and papihas to awaken Sri Yugala. At that time, all the birds in the water and on land start calling in their sweet voices: 'mayura sukadi sari kata pikaraja mangala jagara hetu kariche viraja.'"

Great personalities know how to foster eligibility in their disciples. They gently and tentatively introduce us and invite us to that spiritual realm. This experience is afforded only by their association. Without their association, it cannot be gleaned from the pages of a book or any other media.

Srila Narayana Maharaja, a beloved disciple of Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Maharaja, addresses the topic of eligibility in the following discourse.

B. Words of caution from Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

Srila Narayana Maharaja fully embraces the statement of Sri Sukadeva Gosvami (Srimad-Bhagavatam 10.33.39; quoted in Appreciation "F" of Documentary statement 1), which states that if a conditioned soul hears with faith from a self-realized soul about Lord Sri Krsna's pastimes with the gopis, he will attain prema-bhakti and become free from lust. Srila Narayana Maharaja also embraces the commentaries to this verse by his worshipful superiors like Srila Jiva Gosvami and especially Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura.

At the same time, he also gives classes warning followers to be careful not to imitate advanced devotees. The following discourse was given in Australia on December 3, 2002. The devotees had just sung the kirtana Sri Madhurastakam, and then Srila Narayana Maharaja began his class:

"Srila Vallabhacarya's bhajana, Sri Madhurastakam, tells us that everything is sweet (madhura) about Krsna, the original Lord of sweetness. His Yamuna is madhura, His nikunjas (groves wherein Radha and Krsna perform their confidential amorous pastimes) are madhura, and His flute-playing and sidelong glances are also very sweet.

"Who is actually speaking about the sweetness of Krsna here? Is it Kamsa Maharaja, Aghasura, Bakasura, or Putana? Radhika herself is telling this; She alone is qualified to speak in this way. The history behind Her words is this:

"A sakhi once told Her, 'Krsna has left Vrndavana. He now has 16,108 queens, and millions of others also want to marry Him. Why do You have so much love and affection for that crooked Krsna? He has no love for You and no love for Vrndavana. Give Him up and try to forget Him forever.' Srimati Radhika replied, 'O sakhi, what you are saying is true, but I cannot forget Him. Everything about Him is so sweet.'

"Demons like Kamsa, Jarasandha, Duryodhana, Putana, Bakasura, Aghasura, Kesi, Canura, and Mustika were seeing that very same Krsna, but they thought of Him as a very cruel, powerful and dangerous enemy. They did not see or experience His sweetness.

"Do you know why I am speaking in this way? These demons are against Krsna. Therefore, instead of experiencing His sweetness, they simply experience their own enmity. Similarly, if we imagine that we are meditating on Krsna's asta-kaliya-lila and we have not reached the stage of rati, we will also not experience His sweetness. Rather, we will experience our own lusty and other material desires. In this connection, Kamsa and other demons represent our material desires. Krsna and the realization of the sweetness of Krsna is our goal, but do not try to 'jump up to the top of the tree.' Begin from the root of the tree and climb up from there; then you can realize your goal.

"One must follow the proper process of his bhakti from the beginning: 'In the beginning one must have a preliminary desire for self-realization. This will bring one to the stage of trying to associate with persons who are spiritually elevated. In the next stage one becomes initiated by an elevated spiritual master, and under his instruction the neophyte devotee begins the process of devotional service. By execution of devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master, one becomes free from all material attachment, attains steadiness in self-realization, and acquires a taste for hearing about the Absolute Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. This taste leads one further forward to attachment for Krsna consciousness, which is matured in bhava, or the preliminary stage of transcendental love of God. Real love for God is called prema, the highest perfectional stage of life. In the prema stage there is constant engagement in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. So, by the gradual process of devotional service, under the guidance of the bona fide spiritual master, one can attain the highest stage.' (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.4.15-16)

"You must also be able to follow these principles: 'When the seed of ecstatic emotion for Krsna fructifies, the following nine symptoms manifest in one's behavior: forgiveness, concern that time should not be wasted, detachment, absence of false prestige, hope, eagerness, a taste for chanting

the holy name of the Lord, attachment to descriptions of the transcendental qualities of the Lord, and affection for those places where the Lord resides—that is, a temple or a holy place like Vrndavana. These are all called anubhava, subordinate signs of ecstatic emotion. They are visible in a person in whose heart the seed of love of God has begun to fructify.' (Caitanya-caritamṛta, Madhya-līla 23.18-19)

"If you can follow these above-mentioned two slokas, then you can realize something of the goal – otherwise not. I know, and I see, that in Western and Eastern countries, here and there, many of the devotees want to enter asta-kaliya-līla (Sri Sri Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's eight-fold daily pastimes, from morning to next morning), although they do not even know what it is.

"We must be very careful. Our Gosvamis have warned us not to delve very much into this subject matter. This topic is truly our goal, but we can only realize it by following the proper process for advancement in bhakti. If a person has many worldly desires and is attached to women, wine and wealth, how can he properly meditate on asta-kaliya-līla? If one misunderstands his own identity and considers himself to be his body, he will not be able to properly think about asta-kaliya-līla.

"Suppose a man or a woman tries to think about Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes at midnight, for example. Suppose they try to remember how all the gopis left their homes and met Kṛṣṇa alone, and moreover how Kṛṣṇa left all the gopis at night and took only Srimatī Rādhikā in a kunjā, where They played together. What will he or she think about it? Moreover, if such a man and woman meet together at night 'to discuss these topics', what will be the ultimate result of their 'love'? They are bound to feel lust, and thus they will not be able to control their minds. Their characters will be ruined and they will ruin their entire spiritual lives. Do you understand what I am saying? We should not even think about this topic.

"A young – or old – person may remember the following verse: 'O Govardhana! Please grant me a dwelling near your side so that I can easily witness and serve the youthful lovers Sri Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as They perform newer and newer secret, amorous līlas within your many caves where They become completely maddened from drinking prema. You are present and making everything possible.' (Srimad Rāghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's Sri Govardhana-Vāsa-Prarthana-Dasakam, verse 2)

In this verse it is suggested that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are meeting together and embracing. If a devotee who is not very advanced tries to meditate on this, a worldly conception is bound to come. Therefore, always be careful. Sri Sukadeva Gosvāmī, who is a maha-mahābhāgavata, is so detached from material consideration and possessions that he does not even wear a dor-kaupin (loincloth), nor does he even have a bhajāna kutira. He is totally renounced. For him, there is no difference between the most beautiful naked lady and a dry wooden tree. He has no interest at all in the affairs of men and women. Yet, that Sukadeva Gosvāmī offers reverential prānāma to Rāsa-līla and asta-kaliya-līla. Although service to that madhura Kṛṣṇa like that of the gopis is our goal, we cannot pretend to be close to it at our stage.

"Sri Rāya Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura has written: 'Bhāgavan Vrajendra-nāndana Sri Kṛṣṇa and His transcendental abode Sri Vrndavana-dhama are my worshipable objects. The most excellent method of worshipping Kṛṣṇa is that adopted by the gopā-rāmanīs, the young wives of Vrajā. Srimad-Bhāgavatam is the flawless and most authoritative scripture, and Kṛṣṇa-prema is the fifth and highest achievement of human life beyond dharma, artha, kama and moksa. It is thus known as pancama-purusartha or parama-purusartha. This is the opinion of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu. We have supreme regard for this conclusion. We have no inclination or respect for any other, cheating opinions.'

"The highest examples of love and affection in service to Kṛṣṇa are the gopis – but this does not apply to all the gopis. This highest service cannot even be performed by Srimatī Lalitā or Srimatī Viśakhā or by others like them. Such service can only be executed by gopis like Sri Rūpa-manjarī and Sri Rātī-manjarī. Lalitā and Viśakhā cannot enter a kunjā in which Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are alone and engaged in Their most intimate amorous pastimes, but the manjarīs can enter without hesitation and they can serve both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa there.

"We must be very careful. We should not discuss the confidential matters of Sri Sri Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa before the general public. Be careful. Otherwise, ladies, especially, will be charmed by hearing from you – they will weep, they will run after you, and your character will be lost.

Always try to follow the teachings of the Eleventh Canto of Srimad-Bhāgavatam, and try to follow Sri Rūpa Gosvāmī's Upadesamṛta and Sri Rāghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's Sri Manah-Sikṣā. Then try to gradually come to the stage of rātī, at which time all of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes will automatically

manifest in a very pure form. Try to follow my instructions. Follow the proper procedures delineated by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, by our guru-varga, and especially by Sri Rupa Gosvami and Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami.

"Sri Krsna-dvaipayana Vyasa and Srila Sukadeva Gosvami have somewhat explained about the goal of our life in the descriptions of the incarnations Matsya, and Kurma, and in descriptions of Varaha, Narasimha, Rama, Parasurama, Vamana, and Kalki. They have kept all the madhura-lila in the Tenth Canto, and there they have explained our aim and object fully.

"Krsna Himself became each of the incarnations, like Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Balarama and Kalki. They are all Him; but He is playing the role of being Them. Sri Jayadeva Gosvami sings in his Sri Dasavatara-Stotram:

sri-jayadeva-kaver idam uditam udaram
srnu sukha-dam subha-dam bhava-saram
kesava dhrta-dasa-vidha-rupa! jaya jagadisa! Hare

["O Kesava! O You who assume these ten forms! O Jagadisa! O You who remove Your devotees' material desires! All glories to You! My humble supplication at Your lotus feet is that You please hear this Dasavatara-Stotra composed by the poet Jayadeva, because it describes the essence of Your incarnations and is most excellent, bestowing happiness and auspiciousness." (Sri Dasavatara-Stotram, verse 11)]

"In this connection, Kesava means Vrajendranandana Sri Krsna. That same Krsna is our goal. To serve Him like the gopis is certainly our goal; but be very careful, otherwise you will follow the path of Putana, Aghasura, Bakasura and Kamsa. You will be bound to be like them. Sri Sukadeva Gosvami began speaking about the topics of bhakti from its beginning stages, as well as the processes to achieve the various stages of bhakti.

"Then, in the Eleventh Canto, they discussed Sri Narada Muni's explaining to Vasudeva about the topics instructed by the Navayogendras to Maharaja Nimi. For example, the Navayogendras explained about the 24 gurus, including the air and the Earth. From the air one can learn detachment and from the Earth one can learn tolerance. In those texts, the processes to achieve the highest goal given in the Tenth Canto have also been explained.

"The same goal of life has been expressed in a still better way in Sri Caitanya-caritamrta. In the very beginning of that sastra, Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami explained our ultimate aim and object as follows:

anarpita-carim cirat karunayavatirnah kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasam-bhakti-sriyam
harih purata-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandipitah
sada hrdaya-kandare sphuratu vah saci-nandanah

["May the Supreme Lord who is known as the son of Srimati Sacidevi be transcendently situated in the innermost chambers of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has appeared in the Age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what no incarnation has ever offered before: the most sublime and radiant mellow of devotional service, the mellow of conjugal love." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi-lila 1.4)]

radha krsna-pranaya-vikrtir hladini saktir asmad
ekatmanav api bhuvi pura deha-bhedam gatau tau
caitanyakhyam prakatam adhuna tad-dvayam caikyam aptam
radha-bhava-dyuti-suvalitam naumi krsna-svarupam

["The loving affairs of Sri Radha and Krsna are transcendental manifestations of the Lord's internal pleasure-giving potency. Although Radha and Krsna are one in Their identity, They separated Themselves eternally. Now these two transcendental identities have again united, in the form of Sri

Krsna Caitanya. I bow down to Him, who has manifested Himself with the sentiment and complexion of Srimati Radharani although He is Krsna Himself." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi-lila 1.5)]

sri-radhayah pranaya-mahima kidrso vanayaiva-
svadyo yenadbhuta-madhurima kidrso va madiyah
saukhyam casya mad-anubhavatah kidrsam veti lobhat
tad-bhavadhyah samajani saci-garbha-sindhau harinduh

["Desiring to understand the glory of Radharani's love, the wonderful qualities in Him that She alone relishes through Her love, and the happiness She feels when She realizes the sweetness of His love, the Supreme Lord Hari, richly endowed with Her emotions, appeared from the womb of Srimati Sacidevi, as the moon appeared from the ocean." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi-lila 1.6)]

"Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami especially explained the goal and process to achieve it in the fourth chapter of Adi-lila and in Sri Raya Ramananda Samvada. Also, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu instructed the process to Srila Rupa Gosvami and Srila Sanatana Gosvami, in chapters 19 and 20-23, respectively.

"Be careful about being at the bottom of the tree and, from there, jumping to the top. Do not go in the direction of fire; otherwise you will be burned.

"It is not sufficient merely to speak about the proper established philosophical truths (siddhanta) and processes of bhakti. Try to be actually realized in this. If you do not follow, you cannot advance in actual Krsna consciousness.

"Suppose a disciple is always glorifying Krsna and His sweet pastimes. That disciple is always chanting, but he does not have very much faith in his guru. Suppose he is chanting a hundred-thousand names daily and is always reading about the pastimes of Krsna and glorifying Him, but he is not following his Gurudeva's orders. He sometimes follows his Guru's orders and sometimes does not. Sometimes he follows his uncontrolled mind and not the process and teachings of Srila Rupa Gosvami and Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, and Srila Prabhupada, and he does not behave as his Guru desires. What will be the result? He will not get perfection.

yasya deve para bhaktir
yatha deve tatha gurau
tasyaite kathita hy arthah
prakasante mahatmanah

["Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed." (Svetasvatara Upanisad 6.23).]

C. Srila Sarasvati Thakura wants his followers to truly enter raga-marga

This one line, "Pujala raga-patha gaurava bhange," teaches us the authentic process of bhajana which is suitable for all aspiring sadhakas.

Raga-patha, the path that leads to the transcendental service of the Divine Couple under the guidance of their eternal associates, is not something one can enter on the strength of one's own qualifications. If someone thinks that he is qualified, he will be stranded without help from above as a reward for his arrogance. Therefore "pujala" – the path is to be worshiped, "a little distant, and below."

This is not a ban on raga-marga, but the guaranteed method of entry. By considering oneself unqualified and maintaining the utmost reverence for that path, one becomes a candidate for receiving the mercy of Sri Sri Radha-Krsna and Their devotees. In Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu (1.2.309), Srila Rupa Gosvami explains:

krsna tad bhakta karunya matra labhaika hetuka
pusti margataya kaiscid iyam raganuga ucyate

"The mercy of Sri Krsna and His devotees is the only cause of attaining the path of raga. Therefore, some refer to raganuga-bhakti as pusti-marga, the path that depends on nourishment from above."

At the stage of raganuga-sadhana bhakti, there is some degree of revelation of one's eternal identity. Such revelation comes by mercy. Thus, one who tries to enter the path without endorsement from the higher realm will have to resort to the fruitless technique of fanciful imagination.

Gaurava-bhange – awe and reverence broken:

The mood of awe and reverence is considered incompatible with the prema of the residents of Goloka Vrndavana, so why "pujala raga-patha"?

It is vital not to mix up the internal and external aspects of raganuga-sadhana-bhakti. Awe and reverence is an obstacle to internal service of the sadhaka, but when the sadhaka is in external consciousness, it remains an essential expression of his intense longing. As Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami has illustrated repeatedly in the prayers of Sri Stavavali:

yadiccher avasam vraja-bhuvi sa RAGAm prati-janur
yuva dvandvam tac cet paricaritum arad abhilaseh
svarupam sri rupam sa ganam iha tasyagrajam api
sphutam premna nityam smara nama tada tvam srnu manah

"My dear mind, please hear me! If you are eager to gain residence in Vraja on the platform of RAGA, and if you desire to obtain the direct service of the Divine Youthful Couple, Sri Radha-Krsna, then with great love, BIRTH AFTER BIRTH BOW DOWN and remember Sri Svarupa Damodara, Sri Rupa Gosvami and his elder brother along with their other associates." (Sri Manah Siksa verse 3)

The internal mood of awe and reverence (gaurava) will abate or break (bhanga) upon the influx of mercy from above – for those who deeply revere the path of raga.

Is this instruction only for a neophyte? Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has recommended that a sadhaka in the stage of bhava should pray "asam aho carana renu jusam aham syam" (Srimad-Bhagavatam 10.47.61, quoted in Bhajana Rahasya Chapter 6 Bhava-bhakti, text 24) "Alas! It would be a matter of great fortune if I could take birth as a blade of grass, a creeper or shrub in Vrndavana, and thereby receive the foot-dust of the Vraja gopis."

The conclusion is that making an external effort to avoid awe and reverence is not the process to overcome the internal obstacle of aisvarya-jnana. In external consciousness, an understanding of the opulence of Vraja will always remain, as illustrated by Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami:

yat kincit trna gulma kikata mukham gosthe samastam hi tat
sarvanandadayam mukunda dayitam lilanukulam param
sastrair eve muhur muhuh sphutam idam nistankitam yacnyer
brahmader api sasprhena tad idam sarvam maya vandyate

"With great longing I WORSHIP all the living entities of Vraja, including the grass, bushes, flies and birds, which are filled with transcendental bliss. Their fortune is so great that it is aspired for by personalities such as Brahma and Uddhava." (Vraja-vilasa-stava 102)

Another salient point to consider is that it is not possible to worship a path about which one is forbidden to hear. Consequently, there must be a preliminary stage in which a person who is unqualified for raganuga-bhakti is exposed, in a limited capacity, to the katha of raga-marga.

The rate of exposure is to be decided by Sri Guru in accordance with the eligibility of the disciple.

Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada has written a translation and commentary of Srila Rupa Gosvami's Upadesamrta, called Nectar of Instruction. The eighth verse contains what Srila Rupa Gosvami calls the essence of all advice. In the purport Srila Prabhupada quotes his Prabhupada, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, who confirms that essence – one should mold one's life in such a way that he can gradually come to the platform of raganuga-bhakti under the guidance of a ragatmika-bhakta:

"Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura has commented as follows upon this verse: 'One who has not yet developed interest in Krsna consciousness should give up all material motives and train his mind by following the progressive regulative principles, namely chanting and remembering Krsna and His name, form, quality, pastimes and so forth. In this way, after developing a taste for such things, one should try to live in Vrndavana and pass his time constantly remembering Krsna's name, fame, pastimes and qualities under the direction and protection of an expert devotee. This is the sum and substance of all instruction regarding the cultivation of devotional service.

"In the neophyte stage one should always engage in hearing krsna-katha. This is called sravana-dasa, the stage of hearing. By constantly hearing the transcendental holy name of Krsna and hearing of His transcendental form, qualities and pastimes, one can attain to the stage of acceptance called varana-dasa. When one attains this stage, he becomes attached to the hearing of krsna-katha. When one is able to chant in ecstasy, he attains the stage of smaranavastha, the stage of remembering. Recollection, absorption, meditation, constant remembrance and trance are the five items of progressive krsna-smarana. At first, remembrance of Krsna may be interrupted at intervals, but later remembrance proceeds uninterrupted. When remembrance is uninterrupted, it becomes concentrated and is called meditation. When meditation expands and becomes constant, it is called anusmrti. By uninterrupted and unceasing anusmrti one enters the stage of samadhi, or spiritual trance. After smarana-dasa or samadhi has fully developed, the soul comes to understand his original constitutional position. At that time he can perfectly and clearly understand his eternal relationship with Krsna. That is called sampatti-dasa, the perfection of life.

"Caitanya-caritamrta advises those who are neophytes to give up all kinds of motivated desires and simply engage in the regulative devotional service of the Lord according to the directions of scripture. In this way a neophyte can gradually develop attachment for Krsna's name, fame, form, qualities and so forth. When one has developed such attachment, he can spontaneously serve the lotus feet of Krsna even without following the regulative principles.

"This stage is called raga-bhakti or devotional service in spontaneous love. At that stage the devotee can follow in the footsteps of one of the eternal associates of Krsna in Vrndavana. This is called raganuga-bhakti. Raganuga-bhakti, or spontaneous devotional service, can be executed in the santa-rasa when one aspires to be like Krsna's cows or the stick or flute in the hand of Krsna, or the flowers around Krsna's neck. In the dasya-rasa one follows in the footsteps of servants like Citraka, Patraka or Raktaka. In the friendly sakhya-rasa one can become a friend like Baladeva, Sridama or Sudama. In the vatsalya-rasa, characterized by parental affection, one can become like Nanda Maharaja and Yasoda, and in the madhurya-rasa, characterized by conjugal love, one can become like Srimati Radharani or Her lady friends such as Lalita and Her serving maids (manjaris) like Rupa and Rati. This is the essence of all instruction in the matter of devotional service." (Nectar of Instruction, Purport verse 8)

The following is an excerpt from chapter 14 (called Krsna-prema) of the book Sri Caitanya's Teachings, which is a collection of articles by Srila Sarasvati Thakura:

"The truth is that there is a real plane for the wholesome exercise of the amorous disposition that is part and parcel of our soul. It is necessary to realize the nature of this plane in order to be relieved of our harmful errors in regard to sexual relationship. Some sort of conviction must precede the actual adoption of any proposed method. The personality of Sri Radhika supplies the solution of this problem. Sri Rupa Gosvami has offered the detailed exposition of the subject in his monumental works...

"Madhura-rati is the highest form of prema, and an individual soul even in the stage of raganuga-bhakti in the wake of the ragatmika-bhakti considers herself as a maid, called manjari, under the guidance of the way of services rendered by the dearest Rupa-manjari and Rati-manjari and others who, in their turn, are subservient to Sri Lalita-Visakha-Citra-Indulekha-Campakalata-Rangadevi-Tungavidya-Sudevi – eight sakhis, who are the counter-parts of Sri Radhika. They are all engaged in the aprakṛta services of their beloved Sri Kṛṣṇa for His absolute pleasures and of none else. Their cent-percent satisfaction lies in the absolute pleasure of their beloved alone.

"Hence a sadhaka in raganuga bhakti may be a man or a woman in this physical world. He or she develops the aprakṛta-body of a gopi, called a manjari, if his or her raga is awakened in the wake of the Vraja-gopis. The physical body in this world can never reach the feet of the Lord.

"[That Vraja-gopi,] more technically a manjari, has a particular name, conception of her form and beauty, her particular age, her costumes, her specialized service or seva, and her grove (or kunja) where she receives and serves the Divine Couple Sri Radha-Kṛṣṇa. The individual in raganuga-bhakti meditates inwardly, looking upon himself or herself as a hand-maid of Sri Rupa-manjari, who is the personification of the rupa, i.e., the beauty of Sri Radha, which beauty is, in its turn, the projected absolute beauty of the absolute Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa. Sri Rupa-manjari guides the individual hand-maid in the fold of Sri Lalita-sakhi, who in turn engages the hand-maid in the specialized services of Sri Radha-Kṛṣṇa.

"Preach all over the world the teachings of Sri Rupa and Sri Raghunatha with all your might. Our highest ambition in life has been to turn ourselves into the dust of their feet..."

D. An interview with Sripad Madhava Maharaja

Sripad Bhaktivedanta Madhava Maharaja is a disciple of Srila Bhaktivedanta Vamana Gosvami Maharaja. He is a siksa disciple of Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja, and has been his personal servant and secretary since 1979. In the following interview of May 4, 2006, he was asked to share his understanding regarding statement 3 of the video/documentary:

[Question:] "The narrator of the documentary 'The Universal Teacher' quoted Srila Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada's verse, 'matala hari-jane visaya range, pujala raga-patha gaurava-bhange.' Then he gave the translation, 'Always worship the path of raga-marga, spontaneous devotion. Do not rush ahead. Keep yourself a little distant and below. One who transgresses these instructions will be cast down. That was the motto of Gaudiya Matha.'

"Can you explain the verse further?"

[Sripad Madhava Maharaja:] "The English you quoted is not the translation. It is a statement by Prapujya-carana Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Maharaja. He did not mean for his statement to be the translation."

[Question:] "Then what is the translation?"

[Sripad Madhava Maharaja:] "'Pujala raga-patha gaurava bhange.' Raga-patha means spontaneous devotion. What is spontaneous devotion?"

iste svarasiki ragah
paramavistata bhavet
tan-mayi ya bhaved bhaktih
satra ragatmikodita

["When one becomes attached to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his natural inclination to love is fully absorbed in thoughts of the Lord. That is called transcendental attachment, and devotional service according to that attachment is called ragatmika, or spontaneous devotional service." (Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu 1.2.272, and Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta, Madhya-lila 22.150)]

"Raga-bhakti is the devotion situated in the hearts of the eternal associates of Krsna in Vraja. Here, the word gaurava-bhange refers to the breaking (bhange means break) of the awe and reverence mood (gaurava) by raga-bhakti. The word matala means complete absorption. Such liberated devotees have only one visaya (object of love), and that is Sri Krsna. The word range refers to Sri Krsna's many pastimes. Hari-jana means those who are the kith and kin or intimate associates of Sri Hari or Krsna. They are absorbed in visaya-range. Sri Krsna is the only visaya (the supreme Enjoyer of His devotees' devotion), and all others are asraya (the repository or container of devotion to Him). These devotees are absorbed in His pastimes.

"Because of the raga in their hearts, they have no awe and reverence mood. In this world they worship raga-patha; that is, the path of complete absorption in and attachment to Sri Krsna. By this they also teach us how to enter and then practice raganuga-bhakti.

"Why do we want to worship this path? We are now aspiring sadhaka-jivas, and our ultimate object is to attain raga-bhakti. For that we have to go step by step. By following the correct process we will gradually enter raganuga-bhakti, and then we will attain raga-bhakti."

E. Translation of the beautiful verse

matala hari-jane visaya range
pujala raga-patha gaurava-bhange

Sometimes this Bengali verse is found with the words "visaya range"; and sometimes, as in the inscription on the wall of the Sri Caitanya Sarasvata Matha, with "kirtana range." In either case, the deep import is the same.

With "visaya range":

"The servants of Hari revel in satisfying His transcendental desires.
They worship the path of spontaneous devotion, whereby awe and reverence is overthrown."

Internally the hari-janas are absorbed in their pastimes with Sri Krsna, and externally they teach us by their example how to worship the path of raga. Raga means spontaneous devotion, the devotion of Sri Krsna's (Hari's) friends, parents and beloveds.

Krsna is the only visaya, the only enjoyer. As the enjoyer He has unlimited transcendental desires. These desires are fulfilled by His associates, the hari-janas, who are asraya. The hari-janas revel in fulfilling His desires. They are maddened with the ambition to fulfil His desires.

Srila Narayana Maharaja explains that this verse applies to the liberated associates of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in this world, who have come as raganuga-bhaktas. Sriman Mahaprabhu appeared in this world along with His associates. This verse refers to His associates who were with Him during His time, as well as to all those who appeared after Him.

With "kirtana range":

"The servants of Hari revel in the chanting of the Holy Name.
They worship the path of spontaneous devotion, whereby awe and reverence is overthrown."

F. The real existence of Bhaktisiddhanta

Some devotees say this verse originally manifested from the lips of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, and some say it manifested from the lips of Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara

Maharaja. Either way, according to Srila Sridhara Maharaja himself, this verse is the heart of Srila Sarasvati Thakura.

One of Sripad Narasingha Maharaja's websites has a link to a very short, fifteen second, audio statement of Srila Sridhara Maharaja referring to this verse. We therefore had the good fortune to hear his recorded voice: "Pujala raga-patha gaurava bhange. This is Bhaktisiddhanta vani. The real existence of Bhaktisiddhanta [bhakti-siddhanta] is there."

Documentary Statement 4 – in the form of a visual

Some visuals were shown along with the narrator's statement: "*Sarasvati Thakura also did not allow his disciples to read such books as Gita-govinda, Ujjvala-nilamani or Govinda-lilamrta.*" When the narrator said the word "Gita-govinda," there was a full-screen showing of the cover of Srila Narayana Maharaja's translation and commentary of Sri Gita-govinda.

Response:

Here we find an unfortunate lapse of courtesy, which we prefer to think must be uncharacteristic of his holiness Sripad B.G. Narasingha Maharaja. While mentioning Rasa-lila, he might have displayed the cover of the Krsna Book, written by his own Guru, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. [While writing in his own publication that Srila Sarasvati Thakura did not allow disciples to read or discuss the most confidential parts of Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, he might have displayed his own Guru's edition of the same.]

However, he decided only to present the work of Srila Narayana Maharaja, along with a warning not to read it. Are we to take this as a charitable act of free publicity? If so, we are grateful.

He could have mentioned that the Gita-govinda on the screen begins with an extra thirty-five pages of warnings to support his own warning. His failure to do so unnecessarily portrays the book and its commentator in an objectionable light. By token of the same logic, Sri Jayadeva Gosvami, the original author of Sri Gita-govinda, along with Srila Rupa Gosvami and Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami (the authors of Ujjvala-nilamani and Govinda-lilamrta respectively) also stand inadvertently condemned.

Further, in a recent posting on his Krishna-talk internet article, Sripad B.G. Narasingha Maharaja goes on to confuse the act of publishing a confidential book with endorsing its indiscriminate study, as if the two issues were the same. Little can be said to address such non sequitur without running the risk of accrediting improper logic with substance.

The question may be asked in a general sense: Why do acaryas publish or even write confidential books in the first place? They know that most of us are not qualified. Still, like affectionate parents who bequeath their treasures to their beloved children on the condition of their coming of age, our merciful acaryas leave the priceless transcendental treasure of their realizations in books for their followers to relish when, one day, those followers are mature enough in their bhakti to deeply appreciate them.

Are we to construe their generous provision for our future an incriminating act of sahajiyaism? Better we accept it with a properly adjusted sense of responsibility.

A. Reply to Krishna-talk statements

The following are Krishna-talk's specific statements and our reply to each. Unfortunately, these statements reveal the thoughts behind the documentary producer's

committing the otherwise simply tacit offense of showing the full-screen pictures of Srila Narayana Maharaja's edition of Gita-govinda.

[Unlike the rest of our article, in this section, "A," our words will not be in bold letters.]

Gosai.com/Krishna-talk statement:

It is quite misleading that the publishers have posed Srila Bhaktisiddhanta as having written that article expressly for Gita-govinda...

Our reply:

Sripad Narasingha Maharaja is a very honorable Vaisnava sannyasi. We humbly request him to reconsider his statement. The publishers of Srila Narayana Maharaja's translation and commentary of Sri Gita-govinda never suggested to the reader that the Foreword was written by Srila Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada. The publishers wrote in the subtitle of that Gita-govinda Foreword, "From 'Sri Caitanya's Teachings' Chapter 14." "Sri Caitanya's Teachings" is a compilation of articles by Srila Sarasvati Thakura, produced over half a century before the publication of Srila Narayana Maharaja's edition.

Gosai.com/Krishna-talk statement:

It is a misnomer, since the article presented there as a forward by Bhaktisiddhanta was actually not written by Bhaktisiddhanta. The article was originally written by Professor Nisikanta Sanyal and published in The Harmonist magazine volume 26 #6 in November 1928 (it was later published as a small booklet in 1931). The article was originally called "The Erotic Principle and Unalloyed Devotion" and has been printed and mistakenly attributed to Bhaktisiddhanta in many Gaudiya Matha publications over the decades.

Our reply:

The article used in the Foreword was published in chapter 14 of "Sri Caitanya's Teaching" by Sri Gaudiya Matha of Madras. It was edited by Srila Bhakti Vilas Tirtha Maharaja and several other prominent devotees. The title of that chapter is called "Krsna-prema." The same article is presented in the huge "coffee table" Mandala Publication "Sarasvati Thakura" as the words of Prabhupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, with the title "The Erotic Principle and Unalloyed Devotion."

There is an article from the Harmonist, later printed as a booklet entitled "The Erotic Principle and Unalloyed Devotion" by Professor Sanyal. The first two paragraphs of the article in the Foreword of Sri Gita-govinda are roughly the same as a section somewhere in the middle of Professor Sanyal's article, and that section is subtitled "The Sexual Principle." However, the rest of the article is completely different, although the topic is the same.

Regarding Professor Sanyal's Harmonist article, Srila Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada certainly read and approved in writing the statements therein, as seen by the Foreword he wrote glorifying the article. It may be noted, however, that this is not the Foreword of Srila Narayana Maharaja's edition of Sri Gita-govinda that Sripad Narasingha Maharaja refers to on his website.

Gosai.com/Krishna-talk statement:

The so-called 'Forward to Gita Govinda' is actually Professor Sanyal's article with a two paragraph add-on at the beginning taken from a lecture by Bhaktisiddhanta wherein he speaks briefly about Jayadeva Gosvami.

Our reply:

There was no add-on. There are clearly two separate parts of the Foreword. One part contains Srila Sarasvati Thakura's article from the book "Sri Caitanya's Teachings", edited by Srila Bhakti Vilas Tirtha Maharaja. The other part of the Foreword has a different title, which states, "Foreword: A few words from Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura on Gita-govinda." It is subtitled as follows: "The following discourse was delivered in 1932 on the eve of the 446th commemoration of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance." Also, it is eight paragraphs, not two.

For the information of the readers, there are two separate books in this regard. One is called "Sri Caitanya's Teachings," and that book contains the articles by Srila Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada. There is another book, called "Sri Krsna Caitanya," and that is by Professor Sanyal. Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja wrote in a letter (Mar. 14, 1967): "The late Prof. N.K. Sanyal was my god-brother and his book, "Krsna Caitanya," is approved and authoritative...It will help us a great deal because my spiritual master has given his approval to this book."

Gosai.com/Krishna-talk statement:

...It is indeed a ruse when the publishers of Gita-govinda say that if the followers of Bhaktisiddhanta do not translate and comment upon Ujjvala-nilamani, Gita-govinda, etc. that these books will then be the exclusive property of the Sahajiyas. To the contrary, in doing so, the publishers of Gita-govinda have entered the domain of the Sahajiyas and shown us their true colors.

Our reply:

We are simply sad to read this statement, which is an attempt to dishonor our worshipful siksa-guru Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja by calling him a sahajiya. Our Prabhupada quotes his Prabhupada on the subject of sahajiyas: "Such an advanced devotee has nothing to do with the sahajiyas, who manufacture their own way and commit sins by indulging in illicit sex, intoxication and gambling, if not meat-eating. Sometimes the sahajiyas imitate advanced devotees and live in their own whimsical way, avoiding the principles set down in the revealed scriptures...The sahajiyas' understanding of the love affairs between Radha and Krsna is not bona fide because they do not follow the principles laid down by the Six Gosvamis."

We simply pray to the honorable Sripad Narasingha Maharaja that he will be so kind as to reconsider and then retract his statements.

Regarding Gita-govinda, he may kindly consider all the warnings regarding qualification to read the Gita-govinda that are given in Srila Narayana Maharaja's own Introduction, as well as the other front-matter of the book. It is interesting to note the last paragraph of Srila Sarasvati Thakura's article, which graces the Foreword in Srila Narayana Maharaja's edition: "No idea of the positive nature of the function of the higher plane corresponding to the sexual activity of this world can be conveyed to those who are not completely free from the disease of mundane sexual desire. It is for this reason advisable to abstain from all empiric study of the descriptions of the amorous activities of the Divinity until one has actually been freed from every worldly passion by the preparatory service of Sri Krsna under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master."

Regarding Narasingha Maharaja's statement, "...It is indeed a ruse when the publishers of Gita-govinda say that if the followers of Bhaktisiddhanta do not translate and comment upon Ujjvala-nilamani, Gita-govinda, etc. that these books will then be the exclusive property of the Sahajiyas": It is worth noting Srila Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada's lecture at Sri Radha-kunda in 1932, later published in "The Gaudiya" in 1934. There he said, "We must retrieve asta-kaliya-lila from the hands of the sahajiyas."

B. Srila Narayana Maharaja – a contemporary universal teacher

The respected reader is invited to log on to Srila Narayana Maharaja's website, www.purebhakti.com. There, one can freely read or download his books and hundreds of his lectures. About 500 of his lectures are posted on his website, and from that it is plain to see how he is carefully cultivating bhakti in the hearts of the conditioned souls. For example, he discusses topics like Bhagavad-gita, Druva Maharaja, the conversation between Devahuti and Lord Kapiladeva, King Citraketu, Prahlada Maharaja, Ambarisa Maharaja, Lord Krsna's baby and childhood pastimes, and Sri Siksastakam. He discusses Sri Brhad-bhagavatamrta's explanation of the five types of uttama bhaktas, the history of Srimad-Bhagavatam as given in the First Canto, and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mission and pastimes. He also discusses the glories of the Lord's incarnations and of our predecessor acaryas on their respective appearance and disappearance days.

Finally, he discusses the glory and topmost krsna-prema of the gopis and especially Srimati Radhika. Service to Her lotus feet is the goal of all our Gaudiya-sampradaya acaryas. Following in the footsteps of his predecessors, he teaches that without knowing the goal (the sadhya) no one can engage seriously in the bhakti process (the sadhana).

C. Regarding the title "Unconventional Teachers"

This section discusses the reason for titling our article and website "Unconventional Teachers." All of the self-realized acaryas in our disciplic succession – from Lord Brahma to Srila Vyasadeva to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to Srila Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada to his pure followers of the present day – are universal teachers and "unconventional teachers" at the same time.

We conditioned souls inevitably try to "freeze" the teaching of an acarya in order to promote it in the manner of a marketable commodity. However, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saravati Thakura strongly challenged the conception of fixed rules that were to be applied to everyone at all times. He favored the very personal, adhikara-specific, unconventional guidance of a living acarya – a point which is often hard to appreciate for today's self-taught, multi-media, distance learning generation. The following excerpt is from Srila Sarasvati Thakura's article, "The Killing of Putana" (printed in the January 1932 edition of The Harmonist, or Sree Sajjanatoshani):

"The Supreme Lord Sri Krsna Caitanya, in pursuance of the teaching of the scriptures, enjoins all absence of conventionalism for the teachers of the eternal religion. It does not follow that the mechanical adoption of the unconventional life by any person will make him a fit teacher of religion. Regulation is necessary for controlling the inherent worldliness of conditioned souls. But no mechanical regulation has any value even for such a purpose.

"The bona fide teacher of religion is neither any product nor the favorer of any mechanical system. In his hands no system has likewise the chance of degenerating into a lifeless arrangement. The mere pursuit of fixed doctrines and fixed liturgies cannot hold a person to the true spirit of doctrine or liturgy.

"The idea of an organized church in an intelligible form indeed marks the close of the living spiritual movement. The great ecclesiastical establishments are the dykes and the dams to retain the current that cannot be held by any such contrivances. They, indeed, indicate a desire on the part of the masses to exploit a spiritual movement for their own purpose. They also unmistakably indicate the end of the absolute and UNCONVENTIONAL guidance of the bona fide spiritual teacher." (emphasis is ours)

By describing spiritual guidance as "unconventional", Srila Sarasvati Thakura, the universal teacher himself, teaches that any one specific statement of his, such as "Do not read Govinda-lilamrta" is NOT universally applicable at all times, all places, in all circumstances and for all audiences. We cannot believe that our most respectful superior Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Maharaja would quote his Guru Maharaja as saying that such a statement universally and eternally applies to all.

We all agree about the necessity for caution with rasa and extreme caution with rahasya. But the non-publication of rasa-sastra by one acarya does not preclude the publication of rasa-sastra by another. Srila Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada clearly regards preceptorial guidance as UNCONVENTIONAL and therefore not subject to the formulaic compression of the simplistic motto.

Regarding the title "Unconventional Teachers," three syllables are identical in syntax to Universal Teacher. Un + ve + al are common to both Unconventional and Universal. Unconventional Teacher is immediately recognizable as an elaboration of Universal Teacher. The words "unconventional teachers" was inspired by the above-mentioned article written by Srila Sarasvati Thakura himself.

This eternal principle of unconventionality gives rise to the apparent differences in the approaches of all authentic acaryas – although there is no difference in their message or mission. If only universal teachers could be cloned from the stem cells of a few contextual phrases, we would not have to rely on prayer, introspection and the causeless mercy of Sri Krsna to find genuine guidance on the path to Goloka Vrndavana.

Who can deny that there is a speciality in the presentations in each of our acaryas? The perfect acaryas preach according to time, place, circumstance and audience. According to these four, our acaryas employ various strategies in their preaching. For this reason, no one can demand a fixed, homogeneous meta-narrative.

We find that the same audience receives different instructions from an acarya as that audience matures in bhakti; there are so many examples of this.

Srila Sukadeva Gosvami was speaking Srimad-Bhagavatam to Maharaja Pariksit, who was a resident of Dvaraka and Sri Krsna's relative there. In order to encourage him, Sukadeva Gosvami appeared to express the idea that Lord Krsna is the true son of Devaki and Vasudeva and was carried by him to the house of Yasoda devi, who had just given birth to a baby girl. Later, because Srila Sukadeva Gosvami wanted Maharaja Pariksit to come to the understanding that Sri Krsna's real parents are Nanda Baba and Yasoda-devi, he uttered verses containing the words "pasupangajaya" and "jayati te'dhikam janmana vrajah" in the 14th and 31st chapters of the Tenth Canto. This is all explained in the Tenth Canto commentaries of our previous acaryas.

Our Srila Prabhupada, a follower of Srila Sukadeva Gosvami, did a similar thing. In Nectar of Devotion, one of his earliest books, he wrote that Nanda Maharaja is the foster-father of Sri Krsna. Then, in his Tenth Canto translations and commentaries, as well as those in Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, he established that Krsna is fully the son of Nanda Baba and Yasoda-devi, and only partly the son of Vasudeva and Devaki.

Here is an example which shows that different acaryas will say apparently different things to different audiences of different qualifications – while there is really no contradiction in their ideas. The example is given by Srila Sarasvati Thakura himself, from his article that was printed as the Foreword of Srila Narayana Maharaja's edition of Sri Gita-govinda: "Sri Sukadeva's hesitation to divulge the secrets of the Vedas is well founded. The conduct of Sri Jayadeva Gosvami in speaking without reserve is equally in order if we remember that his book cannot be understood at all by those who are lacking in the highest spiritual culture."

Another example: Srila Rupa Gosvami and Srila Jiva Gosvami are always of the same opinion. Srila Jiva Gosvami is always under Srila Rupa Gosvami's guidance. Outwardly, externally, it sometimes seems that they have different opinions, but they are actually never of different opinions. It appears outwardly that Jiva Gosvami tried to establish svakiya-vada, the idea that Radha and Krsna or Krsna and the gopis are married, whereas Srila Rupa Gosvami clearly established that Sri Krsna and the gopis are paramours (parakiya-vada).

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura has reconciled this. He has explained in great detail how Jiva Gosvami is actually saying the same thing as Rupa Gosvami. We understand Srila Jiva Gosvami through the viewpoint of Srila Cakravartipada. Moreover, Srila Jiva Gosvami himself has clarified this in his commentary on Ujjvala-nilamani. There he states that he was explaining something for the sake of unqualified persons who could not understand the superiority of parakiya-rasa, but that his own personal conclusion was the same as that of Srila Rupa Gosvami.

In the same way, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, Pujyapada Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Maharaja, Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, and our Guru Maharaja Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada are all in the same line. Outwardly, to some, it may sometimes be seen that they have different opinions, but really this is not so. Those who are not on their level see circumstantial, outward, and apparent differences in opinion. In so doing, such persons may criticize one acarya and glorify another – but wrongly, not understanding either of their actual moods and siddhanta.

As quoted above from Srila Sarasvati Thakura's article, "The mere pursuit of fixed doctrines and fixed liturgies cannot hold a person to the true spirit of doctrine or liturgy." Or, stated otherwise, "You cannot be my follower simply by quoting me to everyone."

D. Srila Sarasvati Thakura and raga-marga

As all bona fide acaryas have done, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada has cautioned conditioned souls not to imitate an advanced, raganuga devotee. At the same time, he came to this world to inspire true raganuga-bhakti – and especially rupanuga-bhakti – in their hearts. Srila Sarasvati Thakura is sri gauravani murtaye, the embodiment of Mahaprabhu's teachings and mission. Mahaprabhu's mission is:

prema-rasa-niryasa karite asvadana
raga-marga bhakti loke karite pracarana
rasika-sekhara krsna parama-karuna
ei dui hetu haite icchara udgama

"The Lord's desire to appear was born from two reasons: He wanted to taste the sweet essence of the mellows of love of God, and He wanted to propagate devotional service in the world on the platform of spontaneous attraction (raga-marga or raganuga-bhakti). Thus He is known as supremely jubilant and as the most merciful of all." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi-lila 4.15)

This mission is the same as that of Srila Sarasvati Thakura's father and spiritual preceptor, Saccidananda Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes in his Jaiva-dharma:

"The pure spiritual jiva's relationship with the material world is completely terminated when Sri Krsna wills. Until this time, the jiva's relationship with the material world can only tend toward its eventual cessation (ksayonmukha). In the ksayonmukha stage, the jiva's intelligence attains freedom from matter to the extent of svarupatah jada-mukti (bhava-bhakti), but not to the extent of vastutah jadamukti (prema-bhakti). When one attains the stage of vastutah jada-mukti, the ragatmika-vrtti or mood of the ragatmikias, is awakened in the pure jiva both in terms of his internal spiritual identity (svarupa) and constitutional state (vastu). This ragatmika-prakrti is the nature of the eternal residents of Vraja. The jiva who in the ksayonmukha stage follows in the wake of the ragatmika nature is known as raganuga, one who follows the way of raga. This condition of raganuga should be ardently sought after by the jivas.

"As long as this condition is absent, human intelligence remains spontaneously attached to mundane objects." (Sri Jaiva-dharma, Chapter 3)

E. The Glory of Srila Prabhupada Sarasvati Thakura

In this regard we present three classes given by Srila Narayana Maharaja. The first is a discourse given in Vrndavana, India, in 1991:

HIS LAST DAYS

"Srila Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada knew that he would soon be going to his Master, and therefore he gave some final instructions to his disciples. Our Guru Maharaja, Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, was there, as were Gosvami Maharaja, Bhakti Vilasa Tirtha Maharaja and others.

"He told those in attendance, 'I am unhappy. I have come for a mission – to give the things that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu came to give. He has ordered me to give the teachings of vipralambha (the mood of separation) and gopi-prema. He ordered me to teach the reasons that He came to this world, and to share His gifts.

"However, most of my time was spent in cutting the "jungles" of mayavada, sahajiya-vada, sakhi-bekhi and all other non-devotional ideas. If there is a mayavada jungle, the seeds of bhakti will not sprout. I therefore had to cut so many jungles, and still there are so many jungles left throughout the world. Most of my time was spent in clarifying philosophical points.'

"Saying this, his mood changed and his face became reddish. Then he spoke the following verse:

yasyah kadapi vasanancala-khelanottha-
dhanyati-dhanya-pavanena krtartha-mani
yogindra-durgama-gatir madhusudano 'pi
tasya namo 'stu vrsabhanu-bhuvo dise 'pi'

["Obeisances to the direction that faces Sri Vrsabhanu's daughter. When the breeze coming from that direction playfully moves the edge of His garment, Lord Krsna, who cannot be attained by even the kings of yogis, thinks that His life has now become a great success." (Sri Radha-rasa-suddha-nidhi, text 2)]

"Srila Prabhupada Sarasvati Thakura then explained how Krsna is obedient to Srimati Radhika. He said, 'There is a nice verse by Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami:

"smara-vilasita-talpe jalpa-lilam analpam
krama-krti-parihinam bibhrati tena sardham
mitha iva parirambharambha-vrttaika-varisma
ksanam api mama radhe netram anandaya tvam'

["O Radha, who, without going anywhere else stays on the couch of amorous pastimes, talking for a long time with Lord Krsna and embracing Him so strongly that Your two forms appear to become one, please, for even a moment, delight my eyes." (Sri Stavavali, Sri Prema-purabhidha-stotra, text 4)]

"Sri Krsna is very obedient to Srimati Radhika. She is always full of pride, because Krsna is Hers. She has madiya-mayi-bhava, which means that She always thinks, "Krsna is Mine." Candravali has the mood of tadiya-bhava: "I am Krsna's." Krsna is controlled by Radhika only, because of Her madiya-bhava.

"Srimati Radhika is svadina-bhartrika. This means Sri Krsna is controlled by Her. Svadina bhartrika is of two kinds: maitri and sakhya. Madiya and tadiya are two parts of madhurya-rasa or paramour love, and they are each divided into two parts: maitri-mood and sakhya-mood. When love is slackened by sincerely requesting something, as in a prayer, that is called maitri. When priti (love) becomes prominent and prayer becomes secondary, that type of svadina-bhartrika is called sakhya. Candravali becomes svadina-bhartrika with maitri as the prominent mood (bhava), whereas Radhika becomes svadina-bhartrika with sakhya-bhava. At that time, Srimati Radhika can order anything She likes from Krsna, and He will carry out those orders – He will do so even if He gets a hint of an order. He will always be ready to carry out an order, even if there is only a hint of it. Regarding Candravali's order however, He will only carry out Her prominent orders; she must tell Him what she wants. In this way, Radhika is most prominent among all the gopis.'

"Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura was ordered by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to help all devotees understand that Srimati Radhika is the most powerful among all the gopis, and that in order to become Her dasi (maidservant), we will have to become rupanuga. Without being rupanuga – without the guidance of Sri Rupa-manjari – we cannot serve Radhika.

"Sri Krsna's priya-narma sakhas (His most intimate of cowherd friends) like Subala and Sridama are inclined towards Srimati Radhika. They are pleased when Radhika and Krsna meet. There are also some priya-narma-sakhas who facilitate Candravali's relationship with Krsna, but Prabhupada Sarasvati Thakura was greatly inclined to Srimati Radhika, in favor of rupanuga. He was rupanuga. He wanted to distribute this idea of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu: we want to be the servants of Sri Rupa-manjari, so that we can serve Sri Sri Radha and Krsna – not Candravali and others like her.

"Srla Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada's idea was to preach rupanuga-bhakti. Actually it was not to preach it, for rupanuga is not preached. His idea was to inspire devotees for this service to Srimati Radhika. At the end of his manifest stay in this world, however, he told his followers, 'I could not do this, so I am unhappy. You should all gather and come under the shelter of asraya-tattva (the principle of the pure devotee – the reservoir of love for Krsna). Who is asraya-tattva? Guru is asraya-tattva. Living in such shelter, you should serve the Divine Couple Sri Sri Radha and Krsna under the guidance of Sri Rupa-manjari.' This was the root motive for all his activities – to give this to the world."

GAURA-VANI PRACARINE

The following is excerpted from another class by Srila Narayana Maharaja, given on Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura's appearance day, February 21, 2003, in Olpe, Germany:

"His (Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada's) pranama-mantra addresses him as gaura-vani sri-murtaye, the embodiment or personification of gaura-vani, just as Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja is gaura-vani pracarine. We must contemplate deeply to uncover the inner meaning of this. Gaura-vani refers to that which Lord Gaura (Sacinandana Gaurahari) preached, and what He inspired in the heart of Srila Rupa Gosvami – the glorification of the mood of the gopis and Srimati Radhika.

"Sri Gauracandra told His associates, 'Oh Nityananda, Oh Haridasa Prabhu, go from door to door and preach: bolo krsna, bhaja krsna, karo krsna: chant the names of Krsna, worship Krsna and serve Krsna.' This is gaura-vani.

"Gaura-vani is also what Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu discussed with Sri Raya Ramananda and Sri Svarupa Damodara in the Gambhira, especially His hidden revelation of the meaning of the first and last two verses of Sri Siksastakam.

"Gaura-vani is also the love and affection explained by Srila Rupa Gosvami in Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu, Sri Ujjvala-nilamani, Sri Vidagdha-madhava and Sri Lalita-Madhava.

"Our entire disciplic succession descended to this world from Goloka Vrndavana, and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura is one of the most prominent acaryas. If he had not come, Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mission would have turned into sahajiyaism, wherein all philosophy is asat-sampradaya (outside any bona fide disciplic succession). If one is not serving his Gurudeva, if he does not have strong belief in him and is not following his line of thought, such a person is a sahajiya. This is taking place nowadays. Because the actual message of our parampara is being preached, such persons are somewhat stopped. But I do not know what will happen after I leave this world. A very dangerous stage is coming.

"Many devotees left their Guru, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, and went to Radha-kunda. They wanted to remember asta-kaliya-lila, the pastimes which Lord Krsna performs with His associates in the eight periods of the day and night – not as gopis, but 'goopis' – and for this offense they have gone to hell. They became 'babajis', keeping two, three, or four widows, and they began to relish their so-called 'parakiya-bhajana.' They wanted to jump over the authorized process; they did not want to practice bhakti-yoga, the path of spiritual realization through devotional service to Lord Krsna. They wanted to be gopis by paying two pennies to any bogus person who would 'give' them siddha-deha (one's perfected spiritual identity) and tell them, 'You are such and such gopi.' Such cheaters give a name and other information about that so-called gopi, and after some time their disciples imagine themselves absorbed in Sri Sri Radha-Krsna's most confidential pastimes in the kunjās (secluded forest groves). Do not go in that direction.

"Some persons of ill character who were rejected from the Gaudiya Matha also go to Radha-kunda to become babajis in that asat-sampradaya. Such loose-character and unqualified persons imagine themselves absorbed in meditating on the asta-kaliya-lila of Radha and Krsna in Their midnight and end-of-the-night pastimes. At those times Radha and Krsna meet alone in a kunjā, half naked and kissing each other. What will that 'meditator' think? Material ideas will come to him. He is bound to see such pastimes as material, and this is wrong.

The pastimes of Sri Sri Radha-Krsna are transcendental. Only saintly persons like Sri Sukadeva Gosvami who was a brahmachari (a celibate, unmarried student) from his birth, Narada Muni who is a liberated soul, or Lord Sankara who is an ideal personality can properly think of asta-kaliya-lila.

"Offer obeisances to such pastimes and try to practice bhakti-yoga as our predecessor acaryas have taught us. Begin from the root of the tree, become qualified to climb, and then gradually reach the top. At that time you can relish the fruits of the tree. Otherwise, you will have nothing but false ideas. Try to follow Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, our Gurudeva Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja and Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja."

THE GIVER OF MADHURYA-BHAKTI

Based on an explanation of Srila Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada's pranama mantra, Srila Narayana Maharaja gave a discourse on his appearance day. This discourse was given in Singapore, on the evening of February 13, 2001:

"This is the appearance day of Jagad-Guru Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, and therefore we should discuss his glories.

"...Namah om visnupadaya krsna-presthaya bhutale, srimate bhaktisiddhanta-sarasvatititnamine. In this pranama mantra it is stated: bhaktisiddhanta sarasvati. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has given birth to the murtiman-vigraha of bhakti-siddhanta, the personification of the doctrines of bhakti. In Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura there is all the knowledge that Krsna gave to Brahma, Brahma gave to Narada, Narada gave to Vyasa, and thus, by disciplic succession, came through the rupanuga Vaisnavas down to Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Srila Gaurakisora dasa Babaji Maharaja. All the philosophical truths, of the Vedas, Upanisads, and all other scriptures, were embodied in Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Thakura. If any person came to argue philosophy with him, that person was at once defeated and was bound to accept all his teachings.

"Namah om visnupadaya krsna-presthaya bhutale. He was very near and dear to Krsna – very near and dear – in that male form. But who is he really? In the second sloka of his pranama mantra it is stated: sri varsabhanavi-devi-dayitaya. He is really the eternal maidservant of Srimati Radhika. He is so very dear to Radhika in his form as Nayana-manjari. As Mahaprabhu's associate he is Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami, and as the associate of Radha-Krsna Conjugal he is Nayana-manjari. What is the meaning of the name Nayana-manjari? As one's eyes are very dear to one, Nayana-manjari, who is the personification of the eyes of Srimati Radhika, is so near and dear to Her. She is always serving Srimati Radhika.

"Thus, Srila Siddhanta Sarasvati Thakura has two forms. One form is as Caitanya Mahaprabhu's associate, not only in this world but also in Goloka Vrndavana, in Svetadvipa. And, in Vrndavana also, as Nayana-manjari she serves Srimati Radhika. You have seen in Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami's Vilapa-kusumanjali how the manjaris serve Radha-Krsna Conjugal. Nayana-manjari serves Them in those same ways.

"... Krpabhdaye. He is not called an ocean of mercy only because he gave us harinama. He gave so much more. He brought Goloka Vrndavana. He brought the love and affection of the gopis to this world. If he had not brought all these things, we would never have heard of them. He is therefore an ocean of mercy.

"...Krsna sambandha-vijnana dayine prabhava namah. In this world we have a relationship with our father and mother and our immediate family. We think, 'She is my mother, he is my father, and he is my brother.' But we are not satisfied with that. We want to be a husband or wife, girlfriend or boyfriend. But still we are not satisfied.

"From where have these relationships come? They come from Goloka Vrndavana. There is actually only one relationship – with Krsna. He is not a father there. He is like a friend, like a baby, or like a beloved. In the constitutional form of our soul, there is a relationship with Krsna. We have now forgotten this due to Maya, but we have a relationship. All the relationships of these bodies are false and temporary. They remain only for some days, but the relationship in our constitutional form is eternal.

"We want love. We want something. We first loved our mother, then our father, then our brothers, then other relatives, and then our neighbors. But we were never satisfied. Then we collected wives or husbands, and when we were not satisfied, we got divorced and changed the old ones for new ones. But still we were not satisfied. You cannot be satisfied. No one can ever be satisfied. When you meet with Krsna and serve Him, then you will be satisfied. This is a transcendental relationship, and this relationship is given by Guru. Prabhupada gave this, and this relationship will be forever. It was for this end that he gave the mantra 'klim krsnaya govindaya.'

"Madhuryojjvala premadya sri rupanuga bhaktida. He explained all these truths. He actually came only to give this madhuryojjvala-prema, this gopi-prema, which Srila Rupa Gosvami has written about in his books and which Caitanya Mahaprabhu came to this world only to give. 'Krsna is our beloved' – he came to give this and nothing else.

"Srila Siddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada has written in his articles: 'I came only to give this, but my whole time was spent in cutting jungles.' Pujyapada Srila Swami Maharaja also did this in Western countries. He came to this world to give love and affection for Krsna, but to whom could he give it? He was preaching to unqualified people, and therefore he wanted to make a platform for this love, by cutting the jungles of atheist and mayavada misconceptions. He thus fertilized the field by plowing and cutting jungles, and most of his time went in this. He could not preach as he wanted, but he stored so many deep truths about gopi-prema in his books.

"Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura also did this. In Radha kunda, in his last days, he said that if anyone is only cutting jungles, cutting the arguments of mayavadis and so on, and not accepting the mood of the gopis as taught by Rupa Gosvami, not worshiping Radha-Krsna Conjugal, not following the line of Rupa Gosvami, then even their chanting will not be sufficient to help them. After some time they will become weak and give up all devotional practices. Then they will become nirvisesavadis and mayavadis, as so many are now becoming.

"Sri rupanuga bhaktida. Srila Prabhupada descended to this world, and all our disciplic acaryas also came, only for preaching this rupanuga Vaisnavism. But they had so little time.

"From the beginning, therefore, I was very alert to avoid cutting jungles – because our guru-varga had already cut them down. I considered that I must do something affirmative. I therefore accepted this and I preached it from the beginning. Now, however, coming to the Western countries I began to think, 'To whom shall I tell this?' Now I also have to cut down some jungles. When I am in Vrndavana or Navadvipa, however, I mainly speak about the high class of sweet pastimes of Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Radha and Krsna.

"So Srila Prabhupada was like an ocean of madhuryojjvala-prema. He wanted to distribute it, and he distributed it. If he did not, then from where have we collected these things? All glories to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada. All glories to all his associates. All glories to Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. All glories to all the assembled devotees."

IN REPLY TO THE VIDEO/DOCUMENTARY STATEMENTS

In Paderborn, Germany, April 2006, Srila Narayana Maharaja was presented with the video/documentary statements 1 and 2, and commented:

"You should know that when they were doing Vraja Mandala parikrama at Radha-kunda, Srila Prabhupada gave a talk which is quoted in The Gaudiya. He said, 'Up until now I have spent much of my time cutting the jungles of mayavada and all other philosophical misconceptions. But you should not think that my hari-katha is only up to there. I want to tell you that what our Gosvamis have described, what Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu enacted in the Gambhira, what Mahaprabhu discussed with Raya Ramananda and Svarupa Damodara, Rasa-lila and other related topics are the main objective of our life. Don't think that defeating mayavada philosophy is my main preaching. Try to come to this line.'"

Concluding Words

We pray that this repetition of our worshipful acaryas' statements will be pleasing to them, so that they may mercifully bless the entire community of aspiring Vaisnavas with a greater level of clarity, forgiveness, harmony and respect for each other.

Editorial Advisors: Sripad Madhava Maharaja, Sripad Nemi Maharaja, Sripad Sajjana Maharaja, Sripad Vaikhanas Maharaja, Brajanatha dasa

Associate Editors and Proofreaders: Sripad Damodara Maharaja, Sripad Tridandi Maharaja, Anita dasi, Krsna-kamini dasi, Manjari dasi, Rsabhadeva dasa, Vasanti dasi, Vicitri dasi, Yasoda-gopi dasi

Webmasters and designers: Ashok Krishna dasa, Kishore-Krishna dasa, Madhu Rajanna, Vinay Krishna Dasa