

Qualification for Rāgānugā Bhakti

DOES ONE NEED TO BE A ‘PURE DEVOTEE’ TO START RĀGĀNUGA PRACTISE?

rāgānugā bhakti means allegiance to the eternally perfect *rāgātmikā*-devotees of Vraja. Such is the teaching of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in **Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu (1.2.271)**:

*virājanīm abhivyaktam vrajavāsī janādiṣu
rāgātmikām anusṛtā yā sā rāgānugocyate*

Before we speak of *rāgātmikā bhakti* and *rāgānugā bhakti* we must first know what is *rāga*. *Rāga* is that deep natural loving thirst which causes us to become completely absorbed in our beloved deity:

*iṣṭe svārasikī rāgaḥ paramāviṣṭatā bhavet
tanmayī yā bhaved bhaktiḥ sātra rāgātmikoditā*

(Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.2.272)

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has defined *rāga* and *rāgānuga* as follows:

*tatra viṣayinaḥ svābhāviko viṣaya saṁsargecchātiśayamayaḥ premā rāga
yathā cakṣurādīnām saundaryādau tādrśa evātra bhaktasya śrī bhagavatyapi rāga
ityucyate.....yasya pūrvokte rāga-viśeṣe rucir eva jātāsti na tu rāga-viśeṣa eva
svayaṁ tasya tādrśa rāga-sudhākara karābhāsa samullasita hṛdaya sphaṭika-maṇeḥ
śāstrādi śrutāsu tādrśyā rāgātmikāyā bhakteḥ paripāṭiṣvapi rucir jāyate. tatas
tadiyaṁ rāgaṁ rucyānugacchantī sā rāgānugā tasyaiva pravartate*

(Bhakti Sandarbha 310).

"Rāga means the strong and natural desire of a sense-enjoyer for his beloved sense-objects. The senses, like the eyes, are naturally attracted to their

objects, such as beautiful forms, and they need no encouragement in this. In the same way, when a devotee's heart is naturally attracted to the Lord and he has a deep thirst for the Lord then this is called *rāga*. When a mere ray of the nectar-moon of such *rāga* falls on the crystal-like hearts of those devotees who only have some taste for a particular *rāga* but do not possess that *rāga* itself yet, then the heart rejoices and as a result of hearing from the scriptures and saints taste will awaken within the heart of such a devotee for the devotional expertise of a *rāgātmika bhakta*. This means that *ruci* (taste) will awaken within the heart when we hear about the loving devotional expertise of a *rāgātmika vraja-bhakta* from the scriptures or from the mouth of a saint whose heart is pure, that is, free from lust, anger and envy. The devotion which follows the *rāga* of a *rāgātmikā* Vraja-devotee along with *ruci* is called ***rāgānugā bhakti***".

Both the *vidhi*-devotee and the *rāga*-devotee may therefore begin, simultaneously, with the path of devotion, from the stage of *anartha nivṛtti*, cessation of unwanted habits, progressing through the stages that have been described by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in his *Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu* 1.4.15-16 (*ādau śraddhā tathā sādhu saṅgo 'tha bhajana kriyā*). The difference between them lies not in personal purity, but in their mood. In other words, *rāgānugā bhakti* runs parallel with *vaidhi bhakti*, and not only sequentially. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes in ***Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu* (1.2.291)**:

*rāgātmikaika niṣṭhā ye vrajavāsī janādayaḥ
teṣāṃ bhāvāptaye lubdho bhaved atrādhikāravān*

"Those who are anxious ('greedy') to attain the mood of the eternal, exclusively fixed-up *Rāgātmika Vrajavāsīs*, are eligible to enter into *Rāgānugā Bhakti*." The *rāga*-devotee is under the divine illusion that Kṛṣṇa is equal or inferior to him, following in the footsteps of the inhabitants of Vraja (*vrajalokānusārataḥ*, *Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu*), whose attitude of intimate, spontaneous love, free from awe and reverence, is described in the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavata.

rāgānugā bhakti is not only for perfected souls beyond the stage of *anartha nivṛtti*

It is not a fact that *rāgānugā bhakti* comes after the stage of *sādhanā bhakti* (devotion in practise). First of all, what is *sādhana bhakti*? Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says in **Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.2.2**:

ṛti-sādhyā bhavet sādhyā bhāvā sā sādhanābhidhā

“That goal of *bhāva bhakti* is to be attained through practise with the senses (*ṛti*). This is called *sādhanā*“. **Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.2.5** then declares:

vaidhi rāgānuga ceti sa dvidha sādhanābhidhā

“There are two kinds of *sādhana* — *vaidhi* and *rāgānugā*”.

Nowhere it is said that *rāgānugā bhakti* is a post graduate state of *vaidhi bhakti*. **Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 22,108** confirms this—

ei sādhanā bhakti dui to prakāra; eka vaidhi bhakti—rāgānugā bhakti āra

"There are two kinds of devotion in practise. One is called *vaidhi bhakti* and the other *rāgānugā bhakti*. "

Different *ācāryas* that follow Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī claim that *rāgānugā bhakti* commences at the stage of *niṣṭha*, *ruci* or even *bhāva*, but there is not a word of evidence for that in the authorised scriptures on the topic, like *Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu* or its commentaries, *Bhakti Sandarbha*, *Mādhurya Kādambinī* or *Rāga Vartma Candrikā*.

Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Ādi 4, 231-232, 235-237) declares:

*e sob siddhānta gūḍh – kohite nā juwāy; nā kohile keho anta nāhi pāy
ataeva kohi kichu koriyā nigūḍh; bujhibe rasik bhakta nā bujhibe mūḍh*

.....

*abhakta uṣṭrera ithe nā hoy pravesh; tabe cite hoy mora ānanda viśesh
ye lāgi kohite bhoy, se yadi nā jāne; ihā boi kibā such āche tribhuvane
ataeva bhaktagane kore namaskāra; nihśanke kohiye tār hauk camatkāra*

“All these topics are confidential and shouldn’t be discussed, but if they were not discussed then no one would be able to find out about them. Hence I will disclose some confidential matters now, which will be understood by *rasika* devotees, but not by the fools.....If the camel-like non-devotees cannot grasp such topics then I will be in ecstasy. What greater joy could there be in the three worlds if they, for whom I fear to speak out, will not know of this? Therefore I offer my respects to the devotees and speak out fearlessly. Let the devotees be astonished about what I am about to disclose!”

Śrīmad Bhāgavata (10.33.36) declares:

*anugrahāya bhūtānām mānuṣām deham āsthitaḥ;
bhajate tādrśiḥ kriḍā yāḥ śrutvā tat-paro bhavet*

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed the Rāsa-līlā out of compassion for all conditioned souls and anyone who hears of this becomes His devotee.”

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī comments in his **Vaiṣṇava Toṣaṇī**-comment on this verse:

*ataeva tādrśa bhakta prasaṅgena tādrśiḥ sarva cittākarṣiḥ kriḍā bhajate, yāḥ
sādhāranair api śrutvā bhaktebhyo 'nyo 'pi janas tatparo bhavet. kim uta rāsa līlā
rūpam imām śrutvetyarthaḥ vakṣyate ca—vikriḍitam vrajavadhūbhir idam ca viṣṇoḥ
(S.B. 10.33.39) ityādi. yad vā mānuṣām deham āśritaḥ sarvo 'pi jīvas tatparo bhavet
martyaloke śrī bhagavad avatārāt tathā bhajane mukhyatvācca manuṣyānām eva
sukhena tac chravaṇādi siddheḥ.*

"Kṛṣṇa performs this all-attractive pastime for His devotees, but even ordinary people are attracted to this game by hearing about it. Even they thus become exclusively devoted to the Lord. This will be further explained in verse 10.33.39. The words *mānuṣām deham āśritaḥ* also indicate that the *jīvas* that

attained a human form are able to hear of this pastime and thus become devotees. The Lord descends on the human planets and it is here that the worship of the Lord assumes its most important form. Hence human beings can blissfully attain perfection by hearing of this pastime. "

Śrīmad Bhāgavata 10.33.39 declares that the senses do not become sexually agitated by hearing or reading of the Rāsa-līlā, but rather that they become freed from lust.

*vikriḍitaṁ vraja-vadhūbhir idam ca viṣṇoḥ
śraddhānviṭaṁ nu 'śṛṇuyed atha varṇayed yaḥ
bhaktiṁ paraṁ bhagavatiṁ pratilabhya kāmam
hṛd rogam āśv apahinoty acirena dhīram*

"Anyone who faithfully hears and describes the pastimes of Lord Viṣṇu (Kṛṣṇa) with the ladies of Vraja (the *gopīs*) will attain supreme devotion to God and will soon become free from the heart's disease of lust. "

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī comments as follows on this verse:

*śraddhayā viśvāsenānvita iti. tad viparītāvajña rūpāparādha.....bhaktiṁ
prema lakṣaṇāṁ parāṁ śrī gopikā premānusāritvāt sarvottama jātyām. pratikṣaam
nūtanatvena labdhā hṛd roga rūpaṁ kāmam iti bhagavad viṣayaḥ kāma viśeṣo
vyavacchinnaḥ tasya parama prema rūpatvena tad vaiparītyāt.....anyatra śrūyate (śrī
gītā 18.54) brahma bhūta prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
mad bhaktiṁ labhate paraṁ. ityatra tu hṛd rogāpahānāt pūrvam eva parama bhakti
prāptiḥ tasmāt parama balavad evedaṁ sādhanam iti bhāvaḥ*

"*śraddhānviṭā* means hearing with faith. This word is used to avoid the offence of disbelieving or disregarding the scriptures — that is contrary to the principles of hearing and chanting.....The highest devotion is that of the *gopīs* and hearing and chanting of their devotion is so powerful that this supreme devotion appears in the heart even before the heart's disease of lust is chased out of it.....This despite verse 18.54 of the Gītā, that shows an opposite sequence. This shows that hearing and chanting of the Rāsa-līlā is the most powerful *sādhana* in existence. "

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī, in his commentary on the same verse, condemns those who do not believe this statement of the Bhāgavata, that *prema* comes before the cessation of lust, as *nāstikas*, or atheists, and *mūrkhas*, or fools— *dhīraḥ paṇḍita itī hṛd roge satyapī katham premā bhaved ityanāstikya lakṣaṇena mūrkhātvena rahita...* The word *yaḥ* is very significant. It means anyone who hears and describes this with faith. First the lamp (of pure love) is kindled, and then the darkness (of lust and ignorance) is destroyed. *rāgānugā bhakti*, devotion following one 's sacred passion, is therefore not necessarily only meant for the most advanced, purified souls. The distinction between practitioners of *vidhi bhakti* (compulsory devotion) and *rāga bhakti* (passionate devotion) is made because of their mood and attitude, not because of their possible different levels of purity. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu pointed out to Vyenkata Bhaṭṭa (in **Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 9**) that the goddess of fortune performed many purifying austerities to attain the position of the *gopīs*, but that she could still not attain it because she lacked their sweet intimate attitude towards Him.

*ei lāgi sukha bhoga chāḍi ciro-kāla;
vrata niyam kori tapa korilo apāra*

"Just to associate with Kṛṣṇa, Lakṣmī gave up all sense enjoyment for long and performed severe austerities, following many regulative principles" (**Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya 9, 113**)

rāsa na pāilo lakṣmī, śāstre iha śuni —

"Lakṣmī did not attain the Rāsa dance, I have heard from the revealed scriptures". (**Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya 9, 120**)

*vrajendra nandana boli ' tāre jāne vrajajana;
aiśvarya jñāne nāhi kon sambandha manana
vraja-lokera bhāve yei koroye bhajan;
sei jana pāya vraje vrajendra nandana*

"The people of Vraja know Him as the son of Vrajendra, and they consider that there can be no relationship with Him in awe and reverence. Those

who worship Kṛṣṇa in the mood of the people of Vraja, will attain that Vrajendra-nandana in Vraja." (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 9,130-131)

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda writes in chapter 1 of Mādhurya Kādambini:

bhaktēs tu 'vikriḍitaṁ vrajavadhūbhiḥ ' ityādau— bhaktim parāṁ bhagavati pratilabhya kāmāṁ hṛd rogāṁ āśvapahinotyacirena dhīraḥ (bhāg. 10.33.39) ityatra 'ktvā ' pratyayena hṛd rogavatyevādhikāriṇi paramāyā api tasyāḥ prathamam eva praveśas tatas tayaiva parama svatantrayā kāmādinām apagamaś ca. teṣāṁ kadācit sattve 'pi 'api cet sudurācāro bhajate mam ' iti 'bādhyamāno 'pi mad bhakta ' ityādibhiś ca tadvatām na kvāpi śāstreṣu nindā leśo 'pi.

“Although lust is also considered a fault on the path of bhakti, one can still enter the devotional path, despite being still afflicted by lust and other material desires. Śrīmad-Bhāgavata (10.33.39) says:

“A person who faithfully hears or describes the Lord’s pastimes of Rāsa-līlā with the *gopīs* of Vraja attains supreme devotion of the Lord. He quickly becomes steady and conquers over the senses, giving up lust, the disease of the heart.”

In this text “after attaining supreme devotion” is an unfinished act, showing that *bhakti* can be attained even though one has lusty desires. This shows the most independent nature and power of *bhakti* to destroy lusty desires. Sometimes lusty desires exist even while practicing devotion. From verses like, “If the most sinful person worships Me exclusively...” (Gītā 9.30) and “Though my devotee is afflicted by lusty desires...” (Ś.B. 11.14.18) it is clear that though lusty desires may exist in a devotee, still he is not condemned even slightly.”

There is no guarantee that someone who practises *vaidhi bhakti* is automatically promoted to *rāgānugā bhakti*, rather Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says in **Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu (1.2.309):**

kṛṣṇa tad bhakta kārunya mātra lābhaika hetukā

"Only by the grace of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees this path of *rāgānugā bhakti* is attained."

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says in **Padyāvali**:

*kṛṣṇa bhakti rasa bhāvitā matiḥ krīyatām yadi kuto 'pi labhyate
tatra laulyam api mūlyam ekalam janma koṭi sukṛtair na labhyate*

"No ten million lifetimes of following regulative principles will give you taste for Kṛṣṇa-bhakti. The only price is greed! Purchase it as soon as it is available anywhere! "

It is on sale where the *rasika bhaktas* speak about Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. In connection with the above *śloka*, to use the saying "Fools rush in where Angels fear to tread" is an offence to Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's followers, calling them fools. This 'fools rush in' is a mundane saying which applies to mundane impulsive people and their actions. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda teaches in Rāga Vartma Candrikā (1.5): *nāpi lobhaniya vastu prāptau svasya योग्ययोग्यत्वा vicārah ko 'py udbhavati*: "No candidate ever considers whether he is qualified for this path of *rāgānugā bhakti* or not ". ¹

¹ **HAVING SAID ALL THIS**, My Guru Sādhu Bābā, Kṛṣṇadās Madrasī Bābā, Rohiṇīndranāth Mitra and Madanmohan Dās Bābāji, all great souls, told me, independently from each other, it is better not to read *rasa śāstra* when one is too lusty. I understood that is because when one is an emotionally and physically active lover one will identify with the *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and that is an offence called *ahaṅgropāsana*, meditating on oneself as the deity. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says in Bhakti Sandarbha (276) that *smaraṇa* (even just of the holy name, let alone Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's intimate *līlā*) requires a pure heart – *nāma smaraṇam tu śuddhāntaḥ-karaṇatām apekṣate*. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī has also written (Bhakti Sandarbha 275): *atha śaraṇāpattyādibhiḥ śuddhāntaḥ karaṇas cet...nāma saṅkīrtanāparityāgena smaraṇam kuryat* "When the mind is purified by the process of surrender, one should practise the devotional item of recollection without giving up *nāma saṅkīrtana*." *kintu rahasya-līlā tu pauraṣa-vikāravād indriyaiḥ.....nopāsyā* "But the intimate pastimes should not be meditated upon by (those whose) senses are affected by masculine transformations." (Bhakti Sandarbha 338) When one is less heated one can read these books, and the topic will work as a medicine, as has been promised by the Bhāgavata in the final verse of the Rāsa līlā-narration (10.33.39). There are subtle desires, called *vāsanā*, cherished by people who actually control their outer

So who IS then unqualified to hear it?

This is also explained by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in his commentary on **Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhuḥ (3.5.2)**, which deals with *madhura rasa*: (*nivṛttānupayogitvād durūhatvād ayaṁ rasaḥ*) - *nivṛtteṣu prākṛta śṛṅgāra rasa sāmya dṛṣṭyā śrī bhāgavatād apyasmād virakteṣvanupayogitvād ayogyatvāt* “Because of lack of qualification of those who are without taste for this *rasa* related to the Lord, caused by their equating it with material love.”

In other words, mistaking this *rasa* to be an ordinary mundane affair disqualifies one from entering into *rāgānugā bhajana*.

One cannot learn *vidhi bhakti* from the Guru and then just learn *rāgānugā bhakti* from books, because your Guru did not teach you *rāgānugā bhakti*. Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī says:

asambhāṣya tad bhāva gambhīra cittān kuto śyāma sindho rasasyāvagāhaḥ -

"How can one enter into the Śyāma-ocean without having conversed with a devotee whose heart is steeped in love for Rādhā?" **Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī** writes in his **Rāga Vartma Candrikā (1.6)** –

sa ca bhagavat kṛpā hetuko 'nurāgī bhakta kṛpā hetukaśceti dvividhaḥ. tatra bhakta kṛpā hetuko dvividhaḥ prāktana ādhunikaśca. prāktanaḥ paurvabhavika tādrśa bhakta kṛpotthaḥ ādhunikaḥ etajjanmāvadhi tādrśa bhakta kṛpotthaḥ. ādye

senses. That can be there, OK, and one can still read *rasa śāstra*, but to be grossly active in sex and read *rasa śāstra*, is not something approved by the *mahātmās* I knew. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī said in Gopāla Campū (pūrva 23.1): *tad etad govinda vraja vijana kāntānuvacanaṁ dadhadbhir yogyasya śravasi paramāpyaṁ na sadasi* "This confidential Rāsa-līlā topic is to be heard by qualified people who carry Govinda in their hearts, not in a public assembly."

sati lobhānantaram tādṛśa guru caraṇāśrayaṇ-am. dvitīye guru caraṇāśrayānantaram lobha pravṛttir bhavati.

"There are two causes for the appearance of sacred greed: The mercy of God or the mercy of an *anurāgi* devotee. There are again two kinds of mercy bestowed by a devotee: *prāktana* and *ādhunika*. *prāktana* means mercy bestowed by a *rāgānugā bhakta* in a previous life, and *ādhunika* is mercy bestowed in the present birth. The *prāktana*-devotee takes shelter of the lotus feet of a *rāgānugā guru* after the sacred greed has arisen in him, the *ādhunika* will get that sacred greed after surrendering to the feet of such a Guru. "

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī gives the following definition of pure devotion in **Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu (1.1.17)**

*kleśaghni śubhadā mokṣa laghutākṛt sudurllabhā
sāndrānanda viśeṣātmā śrī kṛṣṇākaraṣiṇī ca sā*

“1. It destroys all grief and suffering, meaning sins, including the cause of sin, 2. It bestows auspiciousness, 3. It lightens the importance of liberation, 4. It is rare 5. It is deeply blissful and 6. It attracts Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

In his commentary, **Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī** spells out: *tatra sādhana bhaktiḥ kleśaghñi śubhadā rūpā ca* – “The symptoms of *sādhana bhakti* are the first two items – destroying grief, or sin, and bestowing auspiciousness.”

The same **Viśvanātha Cakravartī** writes in his **Mādhurya Kādambini (2.2)**:

....sva-sparśeṇa sparśamaṇir iva karaṇa vṛttir api prākṛtatva-lohatām śanais-tyājayitvā cinmayatva śuddha jāmbunadatām prāpayantyāḥ kandalībhāvānte samudgacchantyāḥ sādhanābhikhye dve patrike vivriyete. tayoḥ prathamā kleśaghñi dvitīyā śubhadeti. dvayor api tayor antas tu lobha pravartakatva lakṣaṇa-caikkanyena yeṣām ahaṁ priya ātmā sutaś ca ityādi śuddha sambandha snigdhatayā ca prāptotkarṣe deśe rāga nāmno rājña evādhikāraḥ. bahis tu tasmād bhārata sarvātmā ityādi śāstra pravartakatva lakṣaṇa-pāruṣyābhāsenā priyādi śuddha sambandhābhāvāt svata evāti snigdhatānudayena pūrvataḥ kiñcid apakṛṣṭe deśe

vaidha nāmno' parasya rājñah. kleśaghñatva-śubhadatvābhyāntu prāyaśuyorṇa ko'pi viśeṣah.

“Like a touchstone, this creeper of *bhakti* eventually transforms the iron-like material nature of the senses into the most pure transcendental gold. Gradually the *sādhana-bhakti*-creeper sprouts and unfolds two leaves. The first is called *kleśaghñi*, destroyer of material sufferings, and the second is called *śubhadā*, giver of all auspiciousness. The inner surface of the two leaves is the domain of the king called *rāga* (divine passionate devotion), and is very smooth, the sign of its being born out of spontaneous greed. It is superior due to its appearance from the pure affectionate relation with the Lord as described in the *Bhāgavata* (3.25.38), “I am their dear one, very life, son,...”. The outer surface of the leaves is ruled by another king known as *vaidha* (regulative devotion) and slightly rough in nature, the sign of its being born from the injunctions of the scriptures. It is somewhat inferior and slightly rough due to the lack of pure affectionate relation with the Lord. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* (2.1.5) says, “Therefore, persons desiring fearlessness should worship the Lord, the Supersoul.” However, both *rāga* and *vaidhī*, almost equally manifest the symptoms of *kleśaghñi* and *śubhadā*. “

Here it is again proven that *rāgānugā bhakti* is, like *vaidhi bhakti*, a *sādhana* that starts from the beginning of *bhakti*-practise. *rāga* is the inner leaf and *vaidhi* the outer.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary on Bhakti Rasamṛta Sindhu 1.2.292:

tat-tad-bhāvādi-mādhurye śrī-bhāgavatādi-prasiddhāvatāra-līlā-varṇanamaya-śāstra-sāmānye śrute śravaṇa-dvārā yat kiñcid anubhūte sati yacchāstram vidhi-vākyam nāpekṣate | yuktim ca na kintu pravartata evety arthaḥ | tad eva lobhotpatter lakṣaṇam anumāpakam tādrśa-hetu-jñānād eva lobhotpattir anumīyate ity arthaḥ | na tv atra lakṣaṇam lobhotpatteḥ svarūpam iti vyāhyātum śakyam śāstrayuktāpekṣābhāvasya svarūpatvābhāvāt

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's tīkā of Bhakti Rasamṛta Sindhu 1.2.292 -

tat-tad-bhāvādi-mādhurye śrī-bhāgavatādiṣu siddha-nirdeśa-śāstreṣu śrute śravaṇa-dvārā yat kiñcid anubhūte sati yacchāstram vidhi-vākyaṃ nāpekṣate | yuktim ca kintu pravartata evety arthaḥ | tad eva lobhotpatter lakṣaṇam iti

The meaning of both the above texts is identical - "When one has got even a slight (*yat kincit*) feeling for the sweet moods of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees through hearing their descriptions in texts describing the ultimate spiritual goal, such as the Bhāgavata, (the *rāgānugā sādḥaka*) no longer waits for the injunctions of scripture or for logical reasons to do so, but simply takes up (the *rāgānugā* devotional path). This is the characteristic of *lobha*. "

The words *yat kincit* prove that initial *lobha* is not an all-consuming fire.

*

In his book "Śrī Guru Paramparā - Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, Heir to the Esoteric Life of Kedaranatha Bhaktivinoda", Tripurāri Swāmi says –

"...in *Bhakti-sāra-pradarśinī* (his commentary on *Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu*, ed.), *Viśvanātha* tells us that in order to practice *rāgānugā bhakti* one must have attained the stage of *niṣṭhā*."

Response:

*rāgātmikaika niṣṭhā ye vrajavāsī janādayaḥ
teṣāṃ bhāvāptaye lubdho bhaved atrādhikāravān (B.R.S. 1.2.291)*

Is the verse referred to here. The words *eka niṣṭhā* (exclusively fixed, loyal) have been mistranslated to refer to the *adhikāravān*, the *jīva*-candidate, and have confused it for the high stage of *bhakti* called *niṣṭhā*, but it refers instead to the *nitya siddha* role-models, the *Vrajavāsīs*, and means 'exclusive fixation' and not the stage of *niṣṭhā* that *sādhakas* must go through. This is what **Viśvanātha Cakravartipāda** writes in his **Bhakti Sāra Pradarśini-commentary** on this verse –

*rāgātmika bhaktau eka niṣṭhāṃ yeṣāṃ teṣāṃ vrajavāsinam śrī kṛṣṇe yo bhāvās
tat sājātiya bhāvāptaye lubdha ityarthāḥ.*

The word-for-word translation of this commentary runs as follows: *rāgātmikā bhaktāu* = in *rāgātmikā bhakti* (of the *nitya siddha vrajavāsīs*, described in verse 270) *eka niṣṭhām* = exclusively fixed. *yeṣāṃ* = of them, *teṣāṃ* = of exactly these same ones. *vrajavāsinām* = of the *Vrajavāsīs*. *śrī kṛṣṇe* = towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *yaḥ* = whatever. *bhāvaḥ* = feelings. *tat* = that. *sājātiya* = like-minded. *bhāva* = feeling. *āptaye* = for the sake of attaining. *lubdha* = greedy. *iti* = thus. *arthaḥ* = the meaning.

Translation: “It is means those who are greedy after attaining the like-minded feelings of the exclusively fixed *rāgātmikā* *Vrajavāsīs* for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

Here is that definition of the *rāgātmikā bhakti* of the *nitya siddha* *Vrajavāsīs* –

virājanīm abhivyaktam vrajavāsi-janādiṣu
rāgātmikām anusṛtā yā sā rāgānugocyate

(Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.2.270)

“The devotion which is clearly present in the associates of the Lord in *Vraja* is called devotion filled with loving attachment (*rāgātmika-bhakti*), and devotion following in the wake of this *rāgātmikā-bhakti* is called *rāgānugā-bhakti*.”

As one desires to approach the Lord, so the Lord will approach the aspirant – *ye yathā māṃ prapadyante tāṃs tathaiva bhajāmyahaṃ* (B. Gītā 4.11) Reflecting on these famous words of the *Bhagavad Gita*, one can easily understand that varieties of goals are attained in accordance with one 's desires. It is not that all paths lead to the same goal.

vaidhī-rāgānugā-mārga-bhedena parikīrtitaḥ
dvividhaḥ khalu bhāvo'tra sādhanābhiniveśajaḥ

(Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.3.7)

“The paths of *vaidhi* and *rāgānugā* are known to be separate from each other. Engagement in these two forms of practice certainly awakens two distinct varieties of *bhāva*.”

This automatically shows that *rāgānugā bhakti* is not per se a post graduate phase of *vaidhi bhakti*. The goals of these two paths of devotion in practice are understood as follows:

vidhi-bhaktye pārṣada-dehe vaikuṅṭhete yāy

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 24.87)

“Through *vidhi-bhakti*, one will attain the form of an associate in Vaikuṅṭha.”

*aiśvarya-jñāne vidhi-bhajana koriyā
vaikuṅṭhake yāya catur-vidha mukti pāyā*

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Ādi 3.17)

“Those who worship according to scriptural commandments, being aware of the Lord's superhuman prowess, attain the four kinds of liberation in Vaikuntha.”

rāga-bhaktye vraje svayaṁ-bhagavāne pāy

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 24.85)

“Through *rāga-bhakti*, one will attain the Lord Himself in Vraja.”

*rāgānuga-mārge tāre bhaje yei jana
sei-jana pāya vraje vrajendra-nandana*

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 8.221)

“He who worships on the path of *rāgānugā* will attain Vrajendra-nandana (Sri Kṛṣṇa) in Vraja.”

In the realm of Vraja, the sweet and intimate human-like pastimes of Kṛṣṇa prevail. Only in such an atmosphere love can attain its pinnacle. Love which is filled with awareness of the Lord's almight is of an inferior quality. As stated by the Lord Himself:

*sakala jagate more kore vidhi-bhakti
vidhi-bhaktye vraja-bhāva pāite nāhi śakti
aiśvarya-jñānete saba jagat miśrita
aiśvarya-śīthila-preme nāhi mora pṛita*

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta 1.3.15-16)

“Everyone in this world worships Me through *vidhi-bhakti*. *vidhi-bhakti* has no power for attaining the feelings of Vraja. The devotion of the world is mixed with knowledge of My divine prowess. I do not delight in love diluted with prowess.”

It is thus evident that there is a need to deeply reflect on the nature and practice of *rāgānugā-bhakti* for anyone who desires to perfect his loving faculty in relationship with God. There is no other means for tasting the ambrosial sweetness of the Vraja-pastimes of the Lord!



Smaranam and the siddha deha

The *siddha deha* does not just come falling out of the sky, but must be formed gradually, from the point where one is pure enough to start meditating,

by mental practise. In his translations of Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Madhya 8,229; Madhya 22, 155-158) A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī repeatedly suggests that to meditate on the *siddha deha* one needs to be ‘self-realised’, while such a word cannot be found in the original verses. Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura explains that meditation on the *siddha deha* is a *sādhana*:

sādhane bhāvibe yāhā, siddha dehe pābe tāhā
rāga mārge ei sei upāya

(Prema Bhakti Candrikā 57)

"Whatever you think of during your *sādhana*, you will attain in your *siddha*-body. Those are the ways of *rāga mārge*."

sādhane ye dhana cāi, siddha dehe tāhā pāi,
pakkāpakka mātra se vicāra

(Prema Bhakti Candrikā 56)

"The treasure I covet during my *sāadhanā* I will receive in my *siddha* body. The only difference between the two is being ripe and unripe."

This means that the difference between the struggling practitioner and the *siddha* is only in quantity and not in quality. That the *siddha deha* does not come from out of the blue, but must be formed through constant meditation is also confirmed in **Bhagavad Gīta 8,6** —

yam yam vāpi smaran bhāvan tyajantyante kalevaram
taṁ tam evaiti kaunteya sadā tad bhāva bhāvita

"Whatever one contemplates throughout life is what one attains when one leaves the body".

kīṭaḥ peśaskṛtāruddhaḥ kuḍyāyām tam anusmaran

saṁrambha bhaya yogena vindate tat svarūpatām

"The caterpillar imprisoned by a wasp in (its nest on) a wall, and constantly thinking of the latter through intense hate and fear, attains the form of the wasp". (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 7.1.27)

Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.2.295—

*sevā sādḥaka rūpeṇa siddha rūpeṇa cātra hi;
tad bhāva lipsunā kāryā vraja lokānusārataḥ*

"A person who desires loving attraction to His beloved deity Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Vraja must serve in allegiance to the people of Vraja, both in the current practitioner's body as well as in the spiritual, mentally conceived body, which is fit for serving the beloved deity. "

Commentary by **Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī:**

tathāca siddha-rūpeṇa mānasī sevā śrī rādhā-lalitā-viśākhā śrī rūpa manjaryādīnām anusāreṇa kartavyā. sādḥaka rūpeṇa tu kāyikyādi sevā tu śrī rūpa sanātānādi vrajavāsi janānām anusāreṇa kartavyetyarthaḥ - "Mental service must be rendered in the spiritual body in allegiance to Śrī Rādhā, Lalitā and Rūpa Mañjarī and service in the current physical body must be rendered in allegiance to Vraja-people like Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana."

The Bengali translation of the above *śloka* in **Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Madhya 22,154-155)** is:

*bāhya antara ihāra dui to sādḥana;
bāhya — sādḥaka dehe kore śravaṇa kīrtana
mane — nija siddha deha koriyā bhāvana;
rātri dine kore vraje kṛṣṇera sevana*

"There are two kinds of devotion in practise — external and internal. In the external practitioner's body devotional practices of hearing and chanting

Kṛṣṇa 's glories are performed, and internally, in the mentally conceived spiritual body, one renders mental service to Kṛṣṇa in Vraja day and night. "

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami's translation is as follows:

SYNONYMS

bāhya—externally; *antara*—internally; *ihāra*—of this spontaneous love of Godhead; *dui*—two; *ta'*—indeed; *sādhana* — such processes of execution; *bāhye*—externally; *sādhaka-dehe*—with the body of an advanced devotee; *kare*—does; *śravaṇa-kīrtana*—hearing and chanting; *mane*—the mind; *nija*—own; *siddha-deha*—eternal body or self-realized position; *kariyā bhāvana*—thinking of; *rātri-dine*—night and day; *kare*—executes; *vraje*—in Vṛndāvana; *kṛṣṇera*—of Lord Kṛṣṇa; *sevana*—service.

TRANSLATION

“There are two processes by which one may execute this *rāgānugā bhakti*—external and internal. When self-realized, the advanced devotee externally remains like a neophyte and executes all the *śāstric* injunctions, especially those concerning hearing and chanting. But within his mind, in his original, purified, self-realized position, he serves Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana in his particular way. He serves Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day, all day and night.”

Though one indeed needs to be fairly advanced to meditate on one's *siddha deha*, as Jīva Gosvāmī has said in *Bhakti Sandarbha* - *smaranam tu śuddhāntaḥkaraṇatām apekṣate* – “*Smaranam* requires a pure heart”, the term ‘self realised’ is a bit too extreme for a description of *sādhana* (this verse appears in the *sādhana bhakti* chapter of *Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu*).



Discrepancies between A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami's 'Nectar of Devotion' and the teachings of the foundational *ācāryas*:

“Persons desiring to follow in the footsteps of such eternal devotees of the Lord as the *Vṛṣṇis* and *Vṛndāvana* denizens are called *rāgānugā-devotees*, which means that they are trying to attain to the perfection of those devotees. These *rāgānugā-devotees* do not follow the regulative principles of devotional service very strictly...”

However, Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī teaches in **Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu (1.2.296)** –

*śravaṇotkīrtanādīni vaidhi bhaktyuditāni tu
yānyaṅgāni ca tānyatra vijñeyāni maṇiṣibhiḥ*

“The discriminating practitioners should accept the items which were mentioned in *vaidhi-bhakti* such as hearing and chanting as the items of *rāgānugā-bhakti*.”

Commentary by Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda:

śravaṇotkīrtanādīni. guru-pādāśrayaṇādīni tvākṣepa-labdhāni. tāni vinā vraja-lokānugatyādikaṁ kim api na siddhyed ity arthaḥ. maṇiṣibhir iti maṇiṣayā vimṛśyaiva svīya-bhāva-samucitāny eva tāni kāryāṇi. na tu tad-viruddhāni. tāni cārcana-bhaktāv ahaṅgrahopāsana-mudrā-nyāsa-dvārakā-dhyāna-rukmiṇy-ādi-pūjanāni āgama-śāstra-vihitāny api naiva kāryāṇi

“Along with hearing and chanting, items such as surrendering to the lotus feet of Guru should be understood as favorable. Without those favorable items how can one accomplish following after the eternal inhabitants of Vraja? After considering with intelligence, one should select activities conducive to one’s own sentiments for Kṛṣṇa, and not those activities which are contrary to one’s sentiments. Though prescribed in the scriptures, activities of deity worship such as worshipping Rukmiṇī, meditation of Dvārakā, performing *mudrās* and *nyāsas*,

or identifying oneself with the Lord and worshipping oneself, should be rejected.”

No *ācārya* mentions any other rules of *vaidhi-bhakti* which can be scrapped by a *rāgānugā*-devotee.

QUOTE Nectar of Devotion ch.16 - Eligibility for Spontaneous Devotional Service:

“We must always remember, however, that such eagerness to follow in the footsteps of the denizens of Vraja is not possible unless one is freed from material contamination. In following the regulative principles of devotional service, there is a stage called anartha-nivṛtti, which means the disappearance of all material contamination. Sometimes someone is found imitating such devotional love, but factually he is not freed from anarthas or unwanted habits..... When one is actually spontaneously attracted to the loving principles of the gopis, there will be found no trace of any mundane contamination in him.”

Response: In his **Raga-vartma-candrika (1.8)** however, **Viśvanātha Cakravartī** explains that *lobha* is not a black-and-white matter, that it is either absolute and complete, or there is none. *lobha* is not necessarily a burning, all-consuming passion:

sa ca lobho rāga vartma vartinām bhaktānām guru-padāśraya lakṣaṇam ārabhya svābhīṣṭa vastu sākṣāt prāpti samayam abhivyāpya “yathā yathātma parimṛjyate’sau mat puṇya gāthā śravaṇābhīdhānaiḥ tathā tathā paśyati vastu sūkṣmam cakṣur yathāivāñjana samprayuktam ” iti bhagavad ukter bhakti hetukāntaḥ karaṇa śuddhi tārātamyāt prati dinam adhikādhiko bhavati.

“It is described that the devotees on the *rāga*-path gradually progress from the initial surrender to the feet of Śrī Guru up to the stage of directly attaining the object of their desires. ‘When the eye is smeared with medicinal ointment, its ability of perception becomes more and more refined, and accordingly it is able to perceive more and more subtle objects; similarly, according to the degree of the mind’s having become purified by hearing and

chanting of My purifying pastimes, all the subtle truths of reality become manifest in the heart of the *sādhaka*.' From these words of the Lord (S.B. 11.14.26) it is known that through *sādhana-bhakti* the consciousness of the *sādhaka* becomes more purified every day, and he gradually becomes more and more greedy."

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami: *"In the stage of devotional service where regulative principles are followed, there is no necessity of discussing this love, for it must develop of itself at a more advanced stage".*

Response: This is not corroborated by **Rūpa Gosvāmī**.

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami: *"We must always remember, however, that such eagerness to follow in the footsteps of the denizens of Vraja (Vṛndāvana) is not possible unless one is freed from material contamination. In following the regulative principles of devotional service, there is a stage called anartha-nivṛtti, which means the disappearance of all material contamination. Sometimes someone is found imitating such devotional love, but factually he is not freed from anarthas, or unwanted habits. It has been seen that a so-called devotee proclaims himself a follower of Nanda, Yaśodā or the gopīs, while at the same time his abominable attraction for mundane sex life is visible. Such a manifestation of divine love is mere imitation and has no value. When one is actually spontaneously attracted to the loving principles of the gopīs, there will be found no trace of any mundane contamination in his character. Therefore, in the beginning, everyone should strictly follow the regulative principles of devotional service, according to the injunctions of the scriptures and the spiritual master. Only after the stage of liberation from material contamination can one actually aspire to follow in the footsteps of the devotees in Vṛndāvana."*

Response: Rūpa Gosvāmī teaches:

vaidhi rāgānugā ceti sa dvidha sādhanābhidha

(Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.2.5) - There are two kinds of *sādhana* (after first explaining that *sādhana bhakti* means practise with the senses, by souls that are

still conditioned) — *vaidhi* and *rāgānugā*, and nowhere it is said that *rāgānugā bhakti* is a post graduate state of *vaidhi bhakti*. Śrī Viśvanatha Cakravarti states in his **Rāga Vartma Candrikā (2.7)** -

atha rāgānugā-bhakti - majjanasyānartha-nivṛtti-niṣṭhā-ruci-āsakty-antaram prema-bhūmikārūḍhasya sāksāt svābhīṣṭa-prāpti-prakaraḥ pradarśyate

“Then it will be described how the one, who has progressed on the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* through the cessation of the evils (*anartha-nivṛtti*), firmness (*niṣṭha*), taste (*ruci*), and attachment (*āsakti*) all the way to the attainment of ecstatic love (*prema*), will directly come to attain his desired object.”

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami: “*In this connection, we should be careful about the so-called siddha-praṇāli. The siddha-praṇāli process is followed by a class of men who are not very authorized and who have manufactured their own way of devotional service.*”

Response: That will include Bhaktivinoda Thakur, whom A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami himself has made world-famous as an *ācārya*? Bhaktivinoda preaches *siddha-praṇāli* in his books Hari-nāma cintāmaṇi, Bhajan Rahasya and Jaiva-dharma.

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami: “*They imagine that they have become associates of the Lord simply by thinking of themselves like that.*”

Response: Yet, this is what the *ācāryas* say:

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in Bhakti Sandarbha (286) –

tatra bhūta-śuddhir nijābhilaṣita bhagavat sevaupayogika tat pārṣada deha bhāvanā –

"Bhūta śuddhi means that one meditates on one's own desired siddha deha which is fit for serving the Lord".

Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja in Caitanya Caritāmṛta –

mone nija siddha deha koriyā bhāvan,

'Think of your own desired siddha deha as a sādhana (ei sādhana bhakti dui to prakāra, Madhya 22.155-6)

Rūpa Gosvāmī in that very same Nectar of Devotion – *siddha rūpena cātra hi* - “Serve in the *siddha deha* also”, **Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.2.295**, plus this verse’s *ṭikās* by **Jīva Gosvāmī** and **Viśvanātha Cakravartī** – *siddha-rūpeṇa antaś cintitābhīṣṭa tat sevopayogi dehena* – “With the *siddha deha*” means serving in a mentally conceived body which is fit for service.”

Narottama dās Thākur – *sādhane bhāvibe yāhā, siddha deha pābe tāhā* (Premabhakti Candrikā) – “Whatever *siddha deha* one thinks of during one’s *sādhana* is what one attains in *siddha*-stage.”

Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja’s Sāraṅga Rangadā ṭikā of Kṛṣṇa Karṇāmṛta (3):

rāgānugā mārgē anuṭpanna rati sādḥaka bhaktair api svepsita siddha dehaṁ manasi parikalpya - 'On the *rāgānugā*-path even a *sādḥaka bhakta* who has no *rati* yet can think of his own desired *siddha deha*. "

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami: “*This external behavior is not at all according to the regulative principles. The so-called siddha-praṇālī process is followed by the prākṛta-sahajīya, a pseudo sect of so-called Vaiṣṇavas. In the opinion of Rūpa Gosvāmī, such activities are simply disturbances to the standard way of devotional service.*”

Response:

- 1) Where does Rupa Gosvami say this in Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu?
- 2) Bhaktivinoda Thākur, who elaborately preached *siddha praṇālī*, is a pseudo Vaiṣṇava called *prākṛta sahajīya*? Why then call him the 7th Gosvāmī?

In his writings, Swāmījī persistently presents a *vaidhi bhakta* as a neophyte and a *rāga bhakta* as an advanced devotee. He explains the two-fold division of *sādhana* into *vaidhi* and *rāgānugā* as follows (Nectar of Devotion, chapter 2):

“*Now this sadhana-bhakti, or practice of devotional service, may also be divided into two parts. The first part is called service according to regulative principles: one has to follow these different regulative principles by the order of the spiritual master or on the strength of authoritative scriptures, and there can be no question of refusal. That is called vaidhi, or regulated. One has to do it without argument. Another part of sadhana-bhakti is called raganuga. Raganuga refers to the point at which, by*

following the regulative principles, one becomes a little more attached to Kṛṣṇa and executes devotional service out of natural love. For example, a person engaged in devotional service may be ordered to rise early in the morning and offer arati, which is a form of Deity worship. In the beginning, by the order of his spiritual master, one rises early in the morning and offers arati, but then he develops real attachment. When he gets this attachment, he automatically tries to decorate the Deity and prepare different kinds of dresses and thinks of different plans to execute his devotional service nicely. Although it is within the category of practice, this offering of loving service is spontaneous.”

Response: Following such reasoning, the *siddha*-associates of Lord Viṣṇu in Vaikuntha, who are *vaidhi bhaktas*, would have to be woken up for *mangal āratī*? This argument shows that *rāga bhakti* is not to be translated or presented as 'spontaneous devotion' because the *siddha vaidhi bhaktas* in Vaikuṅṭha surely need not be prodded into their service.

Swāmījī comments on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 3.5.4:

“...The bhakti process, as performed under the regulative principles of vaidhi-bhakti, or devotional service following the prescribed rules and regulations, is defined by the revealed scriptures and confirmed by great acaryas. This practice can help the neophyte devotee to rise to the stage of raga-bhakti, in which the Lord responds from within as the caitya-guru, or the spiritual master as Superconsciousness.”

Response: Here again Swāmījī suggests that *rāga bhakti* is some kind of post-graduate stage of *vaidhi bhakti*. That would mean that accomplished *vaidhi bhaktas* like Prahlāda, Bhīṣma and Nārada did not have communion with the *caitya guru* or Supersoul?

Concluding: Both the *vaidhi-sādhaka* and the *rāgānugā-sādhaka* pass through the various stages delineated in the *ādau śraddhā*-verses on their respective paths. *vaidhi-sādhana* and *rāgānugā-sādhana* are not two

subsequent stages of one path, but two different paths leading to separate goals.

FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON RĀGĀNUGĀ BHAKTI

Bhakta: "Some say that it is more humble to become a servant of Mother Yaśodā at a respectful distance than to be right up front as a *mañjarī* with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa".

Advaitadas: "No one can reach the spiritual sky without being totally humble. If there is any pride left you can simply not enter into that realm, be it as a *manjarī*, servant of Mother Yaśodā, associate of Lord Nārāyaṇa or what have you. This suggestion is a purely artificial, mental construction which is not at all based on *rasa vicāra*, *lobha* (devotional greed) or on any *ācārya*'s teaching. *manjarī bhāva* is superior in flavour or quality but not in quantity. In quality there are 4 kinds of flavours - *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya*, in quantity there is but one - full surrender. *mañjarī bhāva* is based on sheer attraction and not on ambition or pride. *mañjarīs* are neither more proud nor more humble than mother Yaśodā's servants. That is not the point of *mañjarī bhāva*. The *siddhānta* of 'the more surrender, the higher the *rasa*' is a myth."

Bhakta: "What about Vaikuṅṭha as a stopover to Goloka? Can one get further promotion to Goloka after first attaining Vaikuṅṭha? "

Advaitadas: "Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu and Caitanya Caritāmṛta speak of two parallel paths that have different symptoms of progress (*bhāva*, *prema*) and different final destinations - *vaidhi bhakti* leads to Vaikuṅṭha and *rāga bhakti* leads to Vraja. (See quotes on page 14) Gopa-kumāra's progressive course in Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta does not apply to regular *sādhakas*. He is widely regarded as a model rather than a prototype *sādhaka*. In Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya līlā,

chapter 14, there was a debate between Śrīvāsa Pandit, who fought the corner of the *aiśvarya*-vision, and Svarūpa Dāmodara, who fought the *mādhurya*-corner. That debate was unsolved - Śrīvāsa was not converted. Murāri Gupta and Vallabha were Rām-bhaktas and none other than Mahāprabhu Himself and Rūpa-Sanātana preached to them to become Kṛṣṇa-bhaktas, but they were not converted either. It was simply their *sthāyi bhāva*. If Vaikuṅṭha is a stopover, where is there a question of *sthāyi-bhāva* then? "

Bhakta: "Why it always has to be *mañjarī-bhāva*, why not *gopa bhāva* (serving Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd boy) or so?"

Advaitadas:

1. "The fact that there are elaborate systems of *sādhana* and entire societies built up around *mañjarī bhāva*, and none (that I know) around *gopa bhāva* (of which there is very scant scriptural description and virtually no social support on the ground) should not be seen as coincidence, but a clear sign that Mahāprabhu really wants us to practise this (*mañjarī bhāva*)".
2. The **entire** Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya is initiated into the *kāma gāyatrī*, which is a *mantra* worshipping Kṛṣṇa as the transcendental youthful Cupid (Madana Gopāla) of Vraja - that is wholly incompatible with loving Kṛṣṇa as a child or a friend, is it not? Is any Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava initiated with a *mantra* worshipping Kṛṣṇa as a child or a friend?
3. The entire Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya sings the Gurvaṣṭakam by Śrīpāda Viśvanātha Cakravartī, in which he clearly depicts Gurudeva as an assistant of the *gopīs* to perfect the amorous pastimes of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa - *nikuñja yunoḥ rati-keli siddhyaiḥ yā yālibhir yuktir apekṣaṇīya*
4. In that same Gurvaṣṭakam, Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī describes how the Guru is always eager to relish the endless sweetness of the pastimes, attributes, forms and names of Śrī Rādhikā and Mādhava, not of Kṛṣṇa with the cowherd boys or His parents - *śrī rādhikā mādhavayor apāra mādhurya lilā guṇa rūpa nāmnām pratikṣaṇāsvādana lolupasya...*"

Bhakta 2: We see in Caitanya Caritāmṛta that Śrīla Kṛṣṇa dāsa Kavirāja Goswāmīpāda has written, *cāri bhāva diyā prabhu nācāimu tribhuvana*, that Śrīman Mahāprabhu has given four *bhāvas*, *cāra-vidha braja-bhāva*, and with these He has made the world dance. And you say Mahāprabhu really wants us to practise this *mañjarī bhāva*, can you comment please?

Advaitadas:

1. Yes, in principle these four *bhāvas* are given, but practically you see huge systems having been built around *mañjarī bhāva* (Guṭikā, *siddha praṇālī*, *yogapīṭha*, maps, what have you) whereas none of these things are in place for practising *gopa bhāva* anywhere (to my knowledge).
2. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava-scriptures are predominantly about *mādhurya rasa*, to the extent that Rūpa Gosvāmī, when coming to that subject in Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu, cut it short and referred to an entire separate book he was to write about it, Ujjvala Nilamaṇi, which is about as big as the Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu itself.
3. The opening verse of Caitanya Caritāmṛta (also composed by Rūpa Gosvāmī), *anarpita carim cirāt karuṇayā avatīrṇa kalau samarpayitum unnatojjvala sva bhakti śriyam* reveals the predominance of *mādhurya rasa* (*unnata ujjvala rasa*)."

Bhakta 3: "If the members of our mission start practicing *rāgānugā-bhakti*, no one will preach anymore and the mission will collapse."

Advaitadās: *rāgānugā*'s value is a matter of attitude, of quality, not of quantity. *vaidhi bhaktas* worship in awe and reverence and *rāgānugā bhaktas* worship in intimate love. *rāgānugā sādhanas* are also preaching worldwide, printing and distributing books and lecturing on Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The outreach practices of preaching, traveling and training disciples can easily go on side by side with *rāgānugā-bhakti sādhanā*. No *śāstra* says that each *rāgānugā sādhanā* should chant 8 lakhs (512 rounds) a day at Rādhākuṇḍa all day. Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.2.5 says that *rāgānugā* is a *sādhanā*, simple. There's no link at all between *vairāgya* or huge *sādhanā* and *rāgānugā bhakti*.