

THE DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTION
OF
ŚRĪ RŪPA GOSVĀMĪ

A monograph by
ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD
BHAKTIVEDĀNTA NĀRĀYAṆA
GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

on the occasion of *viraha-tithi-mahotsava*,
the divine disappearance day,
of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī



BOOKS BY ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTIVEDĀNTA NĀRĀYAṆA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

• Arcana-dīpikā • Beyond Nīrvāṇa • Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu • Śrī Bhajana-rahasya • Bhakti-rasāyana • Bhakti-tattva-viveka • Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā • Controlled by Love • Dāmodara-līlā-mādhurī • The Essence of Bhagavad-gītā • Five Essential Essays • Going Beyond Vaiṁkuṅṭha • Guru-devatātmā • Happiness in a Fool's Paradise • Jaiva-dharma • Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā • Pinnacle of Devotion • Rāga-vartma-candrikā • Śrī Prabandhāvalī • Secret Truths of the Bhāgavatam • Secrets of the Undiscovered Self • Śiva-tattva • Śrī Camatkāra-candrikā • Śrī Dāmodarāṣṭakam • Śrī Gauḍīya Gīti-guccha • Śrī Gīta-govinda • Śrī Gopī-gīta • Śrī Harināma Mahā-mantra • Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma • Śrī Prema-samputa • Śrī Saṅkalpa-kalpadrumaḥ • Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka • Śrī Upadeśāmṛta • Śrī Vraja-maṅḍala Parikramā • Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī – His Life and Teachings • Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā • Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda Saṁvāda • The Butter Thief • The Essence of All Advice • The Journey of the Soul • The Nectar of Govinda-līlā • The Origin of Ratha-yātrā • The Way of Love • Letters From America • My Śikṣā-guru and Priya-bandhu • Veṅṅu-gīta • Rays of The Harmonist (periodical)

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THE DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTION OF ŚRĪ RŪPA GOSVĀMĪ

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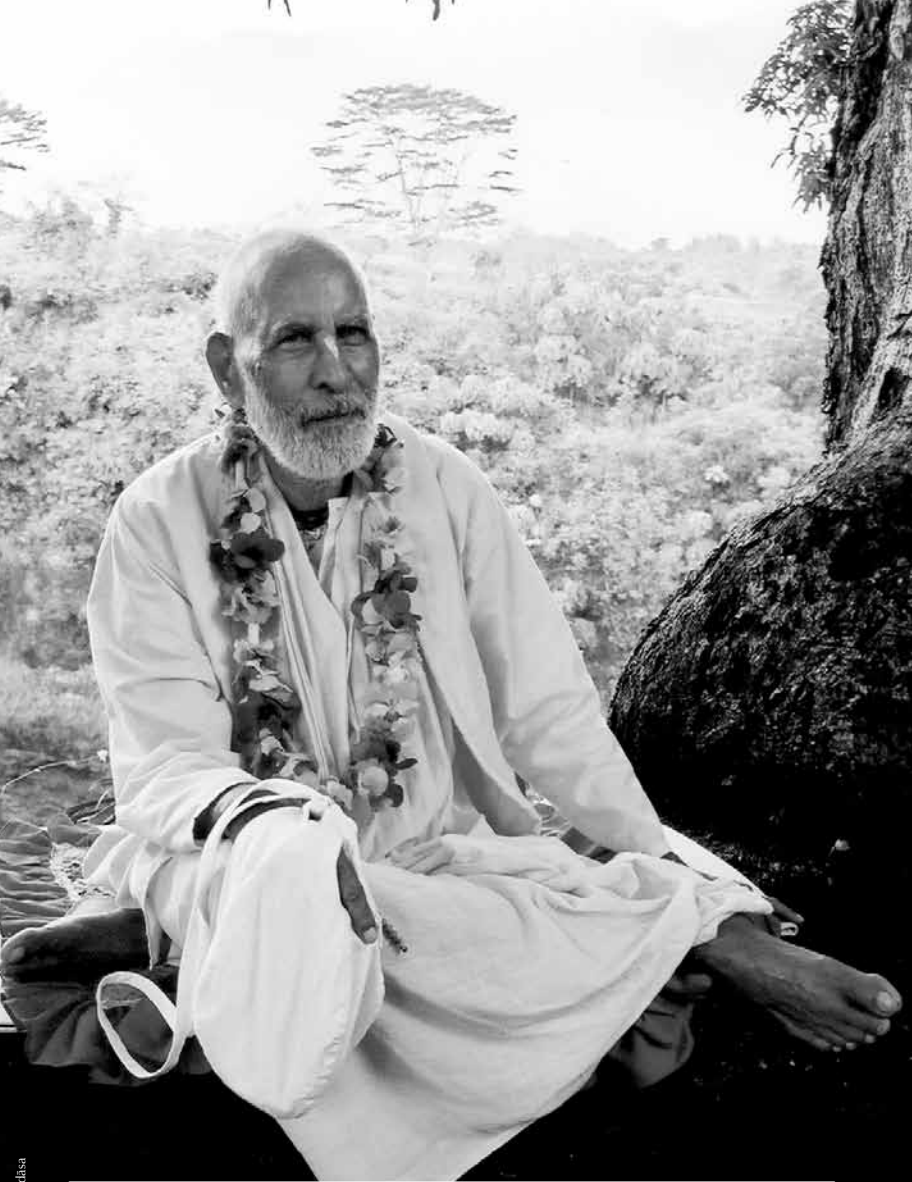
Dedicated to my Holy Master



*śrī gauḍīya-vedānta-ācārya-kesarī nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa
om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata śrī*

**ŚRĪMAD BHAKTI PRAJÑĀNA KEŚAVA
GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA**

*the best amongst the tenth generation
of descendants in the bhāgavata-paramparā
from Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu,
and the founder of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti
and its branches throughout the world.*



Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

The Distinctive Contribution of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī

*śrī-caitanya-mano-'bhīṣṭam sthāpitam yena bhū-tale
svayam rūpaḥ kadā mahyam dādāti sva-padāntikam*

Prema-bhakti-candrikā¹ (Maṅgalācaraṇa)

When will that Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, who has fulfilled the innermost desire of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu on this earth, give me shelter at his lotus feet?

Mano-abhīṣṭam, the heart's desire

What is the innermost desire of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu?

*anarpita-carīm cirāt karuṇayāvātīrṇaḥ kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasām sva-bhakti-śriyam
hariḥ puraṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandīpitaḥ
sadā hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ śacī-nandanah*

Śrī Vidagdha Mādhava² (1.2)

May Śrī Śacīnandana Gaurahari, resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, manifest Himself within your hearts. It had been a long time that He had not bestowed that most excellent, exalted, radiant conjugal mellow (*ujjvala-rasa*) on the world, and so He has mercifully descended in the age of Kali³ to bestow the wealth of devotional service unto Himself (*sva-bhakti*).

¹ A collection of songs by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.

² *Śrī Vidagdha-mādhava* is a drama of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī finished this book in the year 1454 Śakābda (A.D. 1532).

³ The present age of quarrel and hypocrisy, known as the Iron Age.

Even though Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the original source of all incarnations, is endowed with six opulences⁴, He is also *rasika-śekhara*, the supreme enjoyer of *rasa*, the mellow of transcendental relationships. During His manifest pastimes in this world, He personally tasted the twelve *rasas*⁵, such as the mellow of conjugal love (*madhura-rasa*), but He did not give that *prema* (divine love), to the living beings of the world. Therefore, in the first portion, or the *sandhyā*, of Kali-yuga, Śrī Śacī-nandana Gaurahari, who is the manifestation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa when He is adorned with the mood (*bhāva*) and splendor (*kānti*) of Śrī Rādhā, mercifully appeared in order to bestow the beauty, known as *śrī* or *śobhā*, of the most radiant mellow of conjugal love, *unnata-ujjala-rasa*, upon the living beings of the world.

Parakīyā-bhāva, the mood of paramour love

Unnata-ujjala-rasa indicates *parakīyā-bhāva*, the mood of paramour love, and it is only present in the hearts of Śrī Rādhikājī and the *gopīs* who are Her direct expansions (*kāya-vyūha-svarūpā*). Their ecstatic emotions, known as *bhāvas*,

4 *aiśvaryaśya samagrasya vīryasya yaśasaḥ śrīyaḥ
jñāna vairāgyayoś caiva ṣaṅṅām bhaga itīṅganā*

Viṣṇu Purāṇa (6.5.74)

“One who is complete in the six opulences of wealth, power, fame, beauty, knowledge and renunciation is known as Bhagavān.”

5 Beyond Vaikuntha lies Goloka Vṛndāvana. It is here alone that the embodiment of all the *rasas* resides. The twelve *rasas* include five principal *rasas*: *śānta* (neutrality), *dāsya* (servitorship), *sakhya* (friendship), *vātsalya* (parenthood) and *mādhurya* (conjugal); and seven subsidiary *rasas*: *hāsya* (humor), *adbhuta* (wonderment), *karuṇa* (pity), *raudra* (anger), *vīra* (chivalry), *bhayānaka* (fear), *vibhatsa* (disgust).

which include *mādanākhyā-bhāva*⁶ and *rūḍha-bhāvas*⁷, cannot be given to any living being. However, it is possible that the beauty—the *śrī* or *śobhā*—of their *bhāva* may be given. Śrī Rādhikā, the embodiment of *hlādinī-śakti*, the pleasure potency of the Lord, is the desire creeper of love, the *prema-kalpa-latā*. The *gopīs* are Her leaves and flowers, and Her *mañjarīs*, or buds, are the beauty of all of them. Just as in the breeze, these *mañjarīs* further enhance the beauty of the creeper, so the confidential female servitors of Śrī Rādhikā, such as Śrī Rūpa-mañjarī and others, enhance the beauty of Śrī Rādhikā. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has appeared in the form of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu only to bestow the mood of those *mañjarīs*, which is known as *mañjarī-bhāva*, to the living beings of the world through the medium of *śrī nāma-saṅkīrtana*.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's innermost desire was to preach the paramour mood, *parakīyā-bhāva*. Indeed, by the Lord's inspiration and mercy, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī fulfilled this innermost desire of the Lord. Before the advent of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, people would look contemptuously upon this most effulgent paramour mood (*unnata-ujjvala-parakīya-bhāva*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*. However, with strong scriptural arguments, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī established that *parakīya-bhāva* between the heroic lover, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and His beloved heroines, the *gopīs*, is the most auspicious, pure, and elevated mellow. In *Ujjvala-nīla-maṇi*⁸, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī states:

⁶ Wild, passionate ecstasy.

⁷ Advanced ecstasies.

⁸ A transcendental description of transcendental loving affairs that include metaphor, analogy, and higher *bhakti* sentiments. Pure devotion in conjugal love is briefly described in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, but it is elaborately covered in *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*.

*laghutvam atra yat proktaṁ tat tu prākṛta-nāyake
na kṛṣṇe rasa-niryāsa-svādārthaṁ-avatāriṇi*

(Chapter 21, “Nāyaka-bheda-prakaranam —
Varieties of Heroes”)

The defect of the paramour mood that is described in *rasa-sāstras* (which delineate the science of drama⁹) is applicable to a mundane hero, not to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is *sarva-avatārī*, the source of all incarnations. He is also the crest-jewel of these incarnations, all of which control religion (*dharma*) and irreligion (*adharmā*). Since the incarnations are not controlled by *dharma* and *adharmā*, how is it possible that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is Their source, would be influenced? Śrī Kṛṣṇa accepted the paramour mood known as *upa-pati-bhāva* with the desire of tasting *rasa*, the sweetness of transcendental loving relationships. He is the cause of all causes (*sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇa*); He, who is the origin of everyone, is Himself without an external cause of origin; He is all powerful; and He is the reservoir of pleasure (*akhila-rasāmṛta-sindhu*). The *gopīs* are *ānanda-cinmaya-rasa-pratibhāvitābhis tābhir ya eva nija-rūpatayā kalābhiḥ* (Śrī *Brahma-Saṁhitā* 5.37). They represent *ānanda-cinmaya-rasa*, meaning the *gopīs*’ forms are submerged in the nectar of the effulgent mellow of the pinnacle of divine love. Moreover, being the personal expansions and counterparts of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they embody the functions of His pleasure potency, *hlādinī-śakti*. Therefore, where this Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the hero and these *gopīs* are the heroines, how can there be any defect in this mood of paramour love that exists between them?

It is stated in Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi 4.15-16):

⁹ Or books that describe the *rasas*.

*prema-rasa-niryāsa karite āsvādana
rāga-mārga bhakti loke karite pracāraṇa
rasika-śekhara kṛṣṇa parama-karuṇa
ei dui hetu haite icchāra udgama*

The supremely *rasika* and merciful Śrī Kṛṣṇa desired to appear in this world to taste the essence of the mellow of divine love and to propagate *rāga-mārga bhakti*, devotional service based on the platform of spontaneous attraction.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī cites the following evidence from scriptures such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that details the *parakīyā-bhāva* of the *gopīs*:

(1) *tā vāryamāṇāḥ patibhiḥ piṭṛbhir bhrāṭṛ-bandhubhiḥ*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.29.8)

The *gopīs* did not stop, despite being restrained by their husbands, fathers, brothers and other relatives.

(2) *bhrātarāḥ patayaś ca vaḥ vicinvanti ...*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.29.20)

Being unable to see you, your mothers, fathers, husbands, sons, brothers and relatives must be searching for you.

(3) *pati-sutānvaya-bhrāṭṛ-bāndhavān ativilaṅghya te ...*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.31.16)

O Acyuta! We have come here to You, over-stepping our husbands, children, ancestors, brothers, relatives, and the boundaries of morality, propriety, respectability and chastity.

(4) *evaṁ mad-arthojjhita-loka-veda svānām hi ...*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.32.21)

O girls, for My sake, you have abandoned worldly obligations, Vedic principles, and even your near and dear relatives.

(5) *na pāraye 'haṁ niravadya samyujaṁ
sva-sādhu-kṛtyaṁ vibudhāyuṣāpi vaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.32.22)

O *gopīs*! You have worshiped Me even after breaking the shackles of household life that are difficult to overcome.

(6) *nāyaṁ śriyo 'ṅga u nitānta-rateḥ prasādaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.47.60)

During *rāsa-līlā*, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed mercy to the *gopīs* and fulfilled their desires by placing His arms around their necks. Such mercy was not obtained even by Lakṣmī-devī, who always resides on His chest.

(7–8) *āsāṁ aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣāṁ ahaṁ syāṁ
vṛndāvane kim api gulma-latauśadhīnāṁ
yā dustyajaṁ sva-janam ārya-pathaṁ ca hitvā
bhejur mukunda-pada-vīm śrutibhir vimṛgyāṁ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.47.61)

Śrī Uddhavajī says:

“Ah! Although the boundaries of Vedic etiquette and custom regarding husbands, sons and relatives are so difficult to give up, these *gopīs* have abandoned them and have obtained the love of Śrī Kṛṣṇa that is searched for by even the *śrutis* (the Vedic hymns). In order to continuously receive the foot-dust of these *gopīs*, I desire to take birth here in Vṛndāvana in the form of a bush, creeper, or herb.” The implication of this statement is that the damsels of Vraja possess love that is far superior even to that of Rukmiṇī Devī and the other queens of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

(9) *gopī-jana-vallabhāya-svāhā*

Śrī Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad (Pūrva 3)

The phrase *gopī-jana-vallabha*, meaning ‘the beloved of the *gopīs*,’ which is found in the *gopāla-mantra* and other *mantras*, is emblematic of the paramour mood, *parakīya-bhāva*.

Other than in *Śrī Ujjvala-nīla-maṇi*, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī has mentioned the *parakīya* mood of the *gopīs* in the dramas *Vidagdha-mādhava* and *Lalita-mādhava*, as well as in books such as *Haṁsa-dūta* and *Dāna-keli-kaumudī*.

The Speciality of the Gauḍīya Sampradāya

In some *sampradāyas*, only Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes of eternal meeting (*milana*) and sporting pleasure (*vihāra*) are accepted. Even within those pastimes, they do not accept pastimes of concealed desire and longing (*pracchanna-kāmukatā*), sulky mood (*māna*), tryst (*abhisāra*), achievement with great difficulty (*durlabhatā*) and opposition (*nivāraṇa*). In regard to the paramour mood of the *gopīs*, they espouse the common sentiment regarding ordinary heroes and heroines and look upon *parakīyā-bhāva* as licentious behavior. “Such people,” according to the thought of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, “are evil-minded!” In the following verse, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī uses the interjection *āḥ* to express great lamentation for these people:

*āḥ kim vānyad yatas tasyām idam eva mahāmuniḥ
jagau pāramahāṁsyām ca saṁhitāyām svayam śukah
Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamanī (3.22)*

He says that in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is also known as *Pāramahāṁsī-saṁhitā*, the great sage Śrī Śukadeva sang

the glories of the *vraja gopīs'* *parakīya* mood in a loud voice. Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa first revealed this *Pāramahamsī-saṁhitā*¹⁰ to Brahmā, the grandfather of the universe, in the form of four verses known as *catuḥ-slokī*, and Paramahansa Śrī Vyāsadeva, who is the manifestation of Nārāyaṇa Himself, composed it. Śrī Śukadeva, the crest jewel of the family of *paramahamsas*¹¹, loudly sang this *saṁhitā* in the assembly of Mahārāja Parīkṣit. Śrī Parīkṣit was awaiting death in the presence of Devarṣi Nārada, Śrī Vaśiṣṭha, Śrī Parāśara, Śrī Veda-vyāsa, and other great souls. Those great personalities were spiritual masters, knowers of the Supreme Absolute Truth, expert in relishing the mellows of devotion, and crest-jewels of liberated personalities. It was at that particular time, in the presence of these personalities, that Śrī Śukadeva sang about this *parakīya-bhāva* in the *Pāramahamsī-saṁhitā Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* discourse. He—the speaker, Śrī Śukadeva—and the audience, who included Mahārāja Parīkṣit and sages such as Śrī Sūta, Śaunaka, Vidura, and Maitreya Muni, were all exalted or even liberated personalities. Therefore, this mood of paramour love between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* can never be reprehensible or sordid.

Bhakti-rasa, the form of devotion

In the Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* before Śrīman Mahāprabhu, *vaidhī-bhakti*, or devotional service according to the regulative principles, was present. However *bhakti-rasa*, the transcendental liquid mellows relished in spontaneous loving devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, was not there. It was solely Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī who established that *bhakti-rasa* is the

¹⁰ A treatise that is fully agreeable and beneficial for swanlike devotees.

¹¹ Divine, swanlike persons.

form of devotion. He used examples to show how *bhakti-rasa* manifests when *rati* (attachment) or *sthāyī-bhāva* (permanent ecstasy) combines with ecstasies such as (1) *vibhāva* (excitants that stimulate affection for Kṛṣṇa) in the form of *ālambana* (supportive excitants) and *uddīpana* (impelling excitants), (2) *sāttvika-bhāva* (existential ecstasy), (3) *anubhāva* (subordinate ecstasy), (4) *sañcārī-bhāva* (transitory ecstasy), etc.

Bhakti-rasa contains five main *rasas*, or serving moods: (1) *śānta* (passive adoration), (2) *dāsyā* (servitude), (3) *sakhya* (friendship), (4) *vātsalya* (parenthood) and (5) *mādhurya* or *śṛṅgāra* (conjugal love); and seven secondary *bhakti-rasas*: (1) *hāsya* (comedy), (2) *adbhuta* (wonder) (3) *raudra* (anger), (4) *vīra* (chivalry), (5) *karuṇa* (pathos), (6) *bhayānaka* (dread), and (7) *vībhatsa* (disgust). Such an illustration of the form of devotion has never been seen before, anywhere.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī is Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī is Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī in the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the form of an eternal maidservant, she serves the Divine Couple in their pastimes in the secluded bowers of Vraja. However, Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī does not explain the process by which the mood of being a maidservant is obtained. In the form of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, though, he has explained this. He states:

*kṛṣṇaṁ smaran janaṁ cāsya preṣṭhaṁ nija-samīhitam
tat-tat-kathā-rataś cāsau kuryād vāsaṁ vraje sadā*

Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.294)

“The male or female practitioner engaged in remembering and serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa should call to mind the *rāgātmika*¹²

¹² *Rāga* is the quality of natural, ultimate absorption in and attachment to the object of one’s devotion. That *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* which is endowed with

devotees—those who are endowed with moods such as *sakhya* (friendship), *vātsalya* (parental affection), and *śṅgāra* (conjugal affection)—whose service he or she longs for. While continuously staying in Vraja, the practitioner should serve the Divine Couple under the guidance of such *rāgātmika* devotees in his or her spiritually perfected body (*siddha-deha*), always remaining submerged in the nectarean pastimes of the Divine Couple.” By this alone, that desired mood can be obtained. Without the specific guidance of the *gopīs*, that *pārakīya-bhāva* cannot be obtained.

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī is endowed with properties or attributes that are more distinguished than even those of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī. By the life and pen of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, the world has reaped greater benefit.

*yañ kali rūpa śarīra na dharata
tañ vraja-prema-mahānidhi kuṭharīka,
ko kapāta ughāḍata
ko jānata, madhura vṛndāvana,
ko jānata vraja-nīta
ko jānata, rādhā-mādhava-rati,
ko jānata soi prīta*

A glorification of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī
by Śrī Mādhava dāsa

The purport of this song is that if Rūpa Gosvāmī had not appeared, who would have revealed *parakīyā-bhāva* (paramour

such *rāga* is called *rāgātmikā-bhakti* and that *bhakti* which follows in the wake of such *rāgātmikā-bhakti* is called *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Examples of *rāgātmika* devotees are: Śrī Rādhā (in conjugal mellow) and Śrī Nanda-Yaśodā (in parental mellow). In fact, all the inhabitants of Vraja—including the *gopas*, *gopīs*, cows, calves, animals and birds—are *rāgātmika*.

mood), which is the means to obtain the great treasure of the love of Vraja? Without his mercy, who could have understood the sweetness of Mathurā and Vṛndāvana and the glories of the damsels of Vraja? Moreover, who could have understood the mood and love of Rādhā and Mādhava?

Understanding the heart of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

At the time of Ratha-yātrā¹³, Śrī Gaurahari was speaking a verse from *Sāhitya-darpaṇa*¹⁴, whose purport only Svarūpa Dāmodara, and no one else, could comprehend. However, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, understanding the innermost desire of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, explained the confidential meaning of that verse in another verse he himself composed. For this, Śrīman Mahāprabhu lovingly slapped him on the back. The *Sāhitya-darpaṇa* verse reads:

*yaḥ kaumāra-haraḥ sa eva hi varas tā eva caitra-kṣapās
te conmīlita-mālatī-surabhayaḥ prauḍhāḥ kadambānilāḥ
sā caivāsmi tathāpi tatra surata-vyāpāra-līlā-vidhau
revā-rodhasi vetasī-taru-tale cetaḥ samutkañṭhate*

Śrī Padyāvalī¹⁵ (386)

That very personality who stole my heart during my youth on the banks of the Revā has now become my husband. The same nights of *madhu-māsa*¹⁶ have arrived.

¹³ Festival of the Chariots of Śrī Jagannātha at Purī.

¹⁴ Literally, ‘a mirror of composition.’ Name of a treatise on literary or rhetorical composition by Viśvanātha Kavirāja (15th century CE). Both Rūpa Gosvāmī and Rāmānanda Rāya were scholars and were expert in composing poetry strictly in accordance with *Sāhitya-darpaṇa* and other Vedic literature.

¹⁵ An anthology of verses compiled by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

¹⁶ *Madhu-māsa* means “a month in Spring.” Also known as Caitra, corresponding to March-April, it is the first month of the year.

The scent of blooming *mālatī* flowers is again there, and the same sweet breezes are gently blowing with the fragrance of the *kadamba* forest. I am also the same heroine in the performance of intimate pastimes, yet even in this, my mind is not happy. It is hankering to go back to the banks of the Revā under the shade of the *kadamba* tree in the *vetasī* grove.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's verse reads:

*priyaḥ so 'yaṁ kṛṣṇaḥ saha-cari kuru-kṣetra-militas
tathāham sā rādhā tad idam ubhayoḥ saṅgama-sukham
tathāpy antaḥ-khelan-madhura-muralī-pañcama-juṣe
mano me kālindī-pulina-vipināya sprhayati*

Śrī Padyāvalī (387)

O *sakhī!* Today, in Kurukṣetra, I have met My dear Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is My life and soul. I am the same Rādhā, and We are both experiencing the same happiness of meeting. But still, My mind yearns for the forest of Vṛndāvana on the banks of the Kālindī,¹⁷ which is flooded by the bliss of the fifth note of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute.

The meanings of the verses of Govinda Virudāvalī¹⁸ composed by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī are extremely confidential, and even powerful, stalwart scholars (*dik-gaja paṇḍitas*¹⁹) cannot understand their meaning. These verses reveal wonderful variety of ornamentation (*alaṅkāra*) and alliteration (*anuprāsa*).

Uttamā-bhakti, pure devotional service

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī describes that *śraddhā* (faith), the first step of pure devotional service (*uttamā bhakti*), leads to *niṣṭhā*

¹⁷ Yamunā River.

¹⁸ A detailed panegyric of Śrī Govinda.

¹⁹ Scholars as strong as the eight elephants that guard the eight cardinal points and support the universe.

(firm faith), *ruci* (taste or relish), *āsakti* (attachment), *rati* (condensed attachment, also known as *bhāva*, a ray of the sun of *prema*) and *prema* (pure love). It progresses further as *sneha* (affection), *māna* (sulky mood), *praṇaya* (intimate love), *rāga* (spontaneous love), *anurāga* (sub-ecstatic love), *bhāva* (ecstatic love), *mahābhāva* (topmost spiritual ecstasy), and *mādana* (topmost ecstasy in meeting).

The definition of pure devotional service, or *uttamā-bhakti*, and its abovementioned successive developmental stages as described by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* are not to be found anywhere else. Even scholars of other *sampradāyas* quote these definitions in their speeches and commentaries. One example is Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's definition of *uttamā-bhakti*:

*anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-śīlanam bhaktir uttamā*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.1.11)

The continuous performance (*anuśīlana*) of devotional service must be done with a mood that is favorable towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the objects and personalities related to Him. Such devotional service—performed continuously and in a favorable mood—should be completely devoid of the following types of attachments and desires:

- (1) attachment for knowledge of the oneness of the *jīva* with the featureless, impersonal Brahman (*nirbheda-brahma-jñāna*²⁰),

²⁰ *Nirbheda-brahma-jñāna* posits that there is no difference between the *jīva* and Brahman, and when ignorance is dissipated, the living being becomes identical with the nature of Brahman. At that time, the *jīva* has no separate existence. Such misguided knowledge is also known as *jīva-brahma-aikya-jñāna*.

- (2) attachment for *sakāma-karma* (fruitive activities) and *niškāma-karma* (performing activities without personal motivation),
- (3) a mixture of attachment for occupational duties in the *varṇāśrama* system²¹ and the practice of mysticism (*yoga*),
- (4) desires for anything other than Śrī Kṛṣṇa and loving service to Him.

Then such a continuous performance of devotional service is known as *uttamā-bhakti*.

The Characteristics of Prema-bhakti

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's definition of *sādhana*, or devotional practice:

*kṛti-sādhyā bhavet sādhyā-bhāvā sā sādhanābhidhā
nitya-siddhasya bhāvasya prākṛtyaṁ hṛdi sādhyatā*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.2)

Sādhana-bhakti is devotional service that is to all appearances accomplished by activities—such as hearing and chanting—of the dull material senses. *Bhāva-bhakti* (ecstatic devotion) and *prema-bhakti* (loving devotion) are obtained through this *sādhana* (practice). From this statement, one should not think that *bhakti* is attained by the activities of the senses; *bhakti* is the eternally established nature (*nitya-siddha svabhāva*) of the pure soul. *Sādhana* is the name of the process by which that *siddha-bhāva*, or perfected mood of the pure soul, is manifest in the heart through the activities of hearing, chanting (*śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*) etc.

²¹ Social and spiritual duties based on the four divisions of social status (*varṇas*) and orders of spiritual culture (*āśramas*).

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's definition of *rati* (condensed attachment), here known as *bhāva-bhakti* (ecstatic devotion):

*śuddha-sattva-viśeṣātmā prema-sūryāmśu-sāmyabhāk
rucibhiś citta-māṣṇya-kṛd asau bhāva ucyate*

Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.3.1):

When the heart becomes melted by *ruci*, that is, an intense longing to attain the Lord, then what was previously *sādhana-bhakti* (regulated devotional service) is called *bhāva-bhakti*. This *bhāva-bhakti* is a special manifestation of *śuddha-sattva*. It is like a ray—the first beam—of the rising sun of *prema-bhakti*.

*ananya-mamatā viṣṇau mamatā prema-saṅgatā
bhaktir ity ucyate bhīṣma-prahlādoddhava-nāradaiḥ*

Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.4.2)

When one develops an unflinching sense of ownership or possessiveness (*mamatā*) in relation to Lord Viṣṇu, or, in other words, when one considers Viṣṇu and no one else to be the object of love, such an awakening is called *bhakti* by exalted persons like Bhīṣma, Prahlāda, Uddhava and Nārada.

*sarvathā dhvaṁsa-rahitaṁ yadyapi dhvaṁsa-kāraṇe
yad bhāva-bandhanaṁ yūnoḥ sa premā parikīrtitaḥ*

Commentary of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.60.51)²²

The bond of mutual affection between a couple that is not destroyed even when the cause for such destruction is present is known as *prema*.

²² The definition of *prema* from Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamanī 14.63. Quoted by Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī in his commentary of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.60.51, describing the pure love between Rukmiṇī and Kṛṣṇa.

*samyañ masṛṇita-svānto mamatvātīśayāñkitaḥ
bhāvaḥ sa eva sāndrātmā budhaiḥ premā nigadyate*

Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.4.1)

When *bhāva* (attachment towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the preliminary stage of transcendental love of God) becomes intensely condensed, the wise call it *prema*. *Prema* completely melts the heart and produces an extreme sense of possessiveness, or ownership (*mamatā*), towards its object, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Similarly, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has also defined *sneha* (affection), *māna* (sulky mood), *praṇaya* (intimate love), *rāga* (spontaneous love), *anurāga* (sub-ecstatic love), *bhāva* (ecstatic love), *mahābhāva* (topmost spiritual ecstasy), *mādana* (topmost ecstasy in meeting), and so on. These are states that had never been described by others. Learned scholars of other *sampradāyas*—even *māyāvādīs*,²³ monists of the school of *advaita-vāda*—also illustrate their work with his definitions.

*ādadānas tṛṇam dantair
idaṁ yāce punaḥ punaḥ
śrīmad-rūpa-padāmbhoja-
dhūliḥ syām janma-janmani*

Śrī Mukta-carita

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

Taking a straw between my teeth, I humbly pray again and again that I may become a speck of dust at Sri Rūpa Gosvāmī's lotus feet, birth after birth. ☸

²³ *Māyāvādīs* contend that this material world is *asatya*, *apratīṣṭhita* and *anīśvara*. It is *asatya* because it is an illusion, just as a rope can be taken for a snake; *apratīṣṭhita* because it has no basis, like a flower in the sky; and *anīśvara*, because Īśvara is not the cause behind creation.

A Brief History of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī (1489 – 1564 CE)

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and his brother, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, appeared in the village of Vāklācandradvīpa in Bengal as sons of a Yajurvedīya Bhāradvāja Gotrīya *brāhmaṇa* named Kumāradeva, whose forefathers hailed from Karnataka. From childhood, the brothers demonstrated sharp intellect and studied under the crown jewel of teachers, Śrī Vidyā-vācaspati. In youth, they were coerced into the government service of Sultan Hussein Shah, the Pāṭhāna ruler of Bengal. Although they rose to prominence—Śrī Rūpa became Dabira Khāsa, the Shah’s private secretary, and Śrī Sanātana was Sākara Mallika, his prime minister—they were desperate to extricate themselves from that situation. Their salvation came when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu visited their city of Rāmakeli in 1513. It was Śrī Mahāprabhu who gave them the names Rūpa and Sanātana. He later entrusted them with His mission to restore the places of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in Vraja and to compose Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature.

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī first arrived in Vṛndāvana in 1514. The underground location of the ancient Deity of Śrī Govinda-deva was revealed to him, and he instructed the young Rājputa Man Singh, later famous as Emperor Akbar’s military commander-in-chief, to construct a temple for Śrī Govinda-



Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī

deva. Historian A.K. Majumdāra, commenting on the effect of the Gosvāmīs' work, says: "The importance of Sanātana, Rūpa and Jīva Gosvāmīs [their nephew] cannot be overestimated. They created modern Vṛndāvana, and made it into a center of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism."

Living as an ascetic, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote voluminously to establish the foundation of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy. His work, which displays uncommon, poetic beauty and unique brilliance in theological thought, has been compared in importance to that of the evangelists in writing the Gospels to establish Christianity. In his youth, he wrote a comedy about Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, *Dāna-keli-kaumudī*, and two narrative poems: *Uddhava-sandeśa* and *Hamsadūta*. In his maturity, he wrote theology: *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*, and *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta*; drama: *Vidagdha-mādhava* and *Lalita-mādhava*; a large body of lyric verses entitled *Stava-māla*; an anthology of poetry entitled *Padyāvalī*; and *Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā*. These are his most famous works.

The work and teachings of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī are alive today in Vṛndāvana, which has become a town of 5,000 temples; in his literature, which has been translated into a hundred languages and read all over the world; in conferences that glorify him, such as the Rūpa Gosvāmī Conference on Vaiṣṇavism held annually on his disappearance day; and in the hearts of *rūpānuga* Vaiṣṇavas of the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, who worship him for having revealed the innermost desire of the Lord.

Sevābhilāṣi Mañjarī dāśi



nitya-śāla-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta
Svāmī Mahārāja



om viṣṇupāda paramahansa parivṛtjākācārya
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta
Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Rūpānuga Ācāryas of the Modern Age



nitya-śāla-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta
Sarasvatī Prabhupāda



nitya-śāla-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna
Kṣāva Gosvāmī Mahārāja