

Back to Godhead Magazine

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Deviant Vaisnava Sects

From the time of Lord Caitanya to the present day, His pure followers have defended His teachings against philosophical perversions.

By Suhotra Swami

Part One: Caste Gosvamis and Smarta-brahmanas

From time to time a devotee of Krsna is faced with touchy questions about the shadow side of his religion. "Is it true there are *gurus* in West Bengal who do dope when they chant Hare Krsna?" Or, "What about that place in West Virginia where they mix Krsna, Christ, New Age, and everything else?"

It's best to keep a broad historical perspective when considering this problem. Hybrid versions of Krsna worship, or even downright perversions of it, are nothing new. They all tend to fit a pattern laid down long ago in India by thirteen deviant sects known as *apasampradayas*.

But before looking at the deviants, one should understand the correct culture of Krsna consciousness. Fashionable or not, there is a definite standard of spiritual life. It is called *sampradaya*.

The word *sampradaya* implies "genuine instruction that has been received through *guru parampara*, or disciplic succession" (*guru paramparagatu sad upadesasya*, from the *Amarakosa* Sanskrit dictionary). In the fourth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita*, Lord Krsna declares Himself to be the original source of genuine spiritual instruction and says that a person is connected to His teachings only through disciplic succession.

Genuine spiritual instruction is meant to foster ideal qualities in the human being. Truthfulness, cleanliness, austerity, mercy, humility, and freedom from material desire are called *daivi-sampat* (transcendental qualities) because they have their origin in Sri Krsna, the transcendental Supreme Person. But fallen souls have no way of associating with Krsna directly. The scriptures therefore say, *sarva maha-guna-gana vaisnavasarire*: in this world, all the best qualities are embodied by the Vaisnavas, Krsna's pure devotees. Vaisnava spiritual masters instill these qualities in their disciples through association and instruction. The disciples of a Vaisnava *guru* thus become qualified to impart *daivi-sampat* to their own disciples in turn. This is the meaning of disciplic succession.

In Kali-yuga, the present age, there are only four genuine *sampradayas* wherein saintly Vaisnava association can be found. One of these is the Brahma Sampradaya, established in South India by the great *acarya* Madhva. This *sampradaya* was accepted by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu when He received initiation into the chanting of the Hare Krsna *maha-mantra* from His *guru*, Sri Isvara Puri. Then, in Bengal (Gaudadesa), Lord Caitanya began His movement of *sankirtana*, the congregational chanting of the holy names of Krsna. Lord Caitanya's *sankirtana* mission, of which the International Society for Krishna Consciousness is the worldwide exponent, is known as the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has identified thirteen *apasampradayas* that claim to have inherited Lord Caitanya's mission, though they have nothing to do with the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya. They are known by the names *aula*, *baula*, *kartabhaja*, *neda*, *daravesa*, *sani*, *sahajiya*, *sakhibheki*, *smarta*, *jata-gosani*, *ativadi*, *cludadhari*, and *gauranga-nagari*. Because these *apasampradayas* (*apa* means "deviated") do not nurture Vaisnava qualities, their missionary activities are condemned as cheating.

As mentioned in *Vaisnava Ke*, by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, the *apasampradayas* display only inauspicious qualities. One is *anitya-vaibhava*, the hankering for material success. Another is *kaminira-kama*, illicit sexual affairs that are usually passed off as "transcendental." And a third is *maya-vada*, philosophical speculation that undercuts the personal nature of God as taught by the Vaisnava *sampradayas*.

What follows is an in-depth look at the deviations of each of the thirteen *apasampradayas*. In this article's first installment, two of the most important, the *jata-gosani* and the *smarta*, are dealt with.

Caste Gosvamis

The word *jata* means "by birth" or "by family." *Gosani* is a Bengali form of the Sanskrit word *gosvami*, which means "one who controls his senses." The word *jata-gosani* is used in a critical sense to refer to those who take the position of *gurus* only on the basis of heredity, without having the required spiritual qualifications as well. The point here is that it is not enough to claim family connections to associates of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. One must be a pure devotee of the Lord.

The devotees in the Gaudiya Vaisnava *sampradaya*, follow the original six Gosvamis of Vrndavana. These six devotees, who were all in the renounced order of life, were most illustrious disciples of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. About these Gosvamis Srinivasa Acarya has written:

The six Gosvamis—Sri Rupa, Sri Sanatana, Sri Raghunatha Bhatta, Sri Raghunatha Dasa, Sri Jiva, and Sri Gopala Bhatta—are worshipable because they renounced their aristocratic family life as insignificant and became mendicants to preach and

deliver the fallen souls. They are always bathing in the waves of ecstatic love for Krsna.

Thus the six Gosvamis set the ideal example of pure devotional service.

To follow in the footsteps of the six Gosvamis, one must strictly follow the rules and regulations of devotional service, as explained by Srila Rupa Gosvami in his *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* (*The Nectar of Devotion*).

Sometimes, however, persons who neglect these devotional principles claim to be *gosvamis* simply on the basis of heredity. They have inherited the name Gosvami but not the consciousness of a *gosvami*.

Without proper devotional training, such *jata-gosanis*, or caste *gosvamis*, disregard the regulative principles, neglect the devotional service of the Lord, and use the temple as a place for their own family comforts.

As Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati used to say, such untrained persons use the worshipable form of the Lord as "stones for cracking nuts" (that is, as a means of income for sense enjoyment).

On the other hand, in India there are still families that are learned and devoted by tradition and training. They strictly follow regulative principles, they render excellent service to the Lord, and they foster Krsna conscious devotional service generation after generation.

Those born in such *gosvami* families have the fortunate opportunity to serve the Lord, and when properly trained they may also become pure devotees. They are then to be accepted as *gosvami* not only in name but in fact.

The essential consideration, therefore, is pure devotional service. Whether born in a high family or a low family, anyone, from any part of the world, can become a pure devotee of the Lord. As stated by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu:

*kiba vipra, kiba nyasi, sudra kene naya
yei krsna-tattva-vetta, sei 'guru' haya*

The pure devotee is one who knows the science of Krsna and follows its principles. Such a person can be accepted as a bona fide spiritual master.

What is objectionable, therefore, is the claim that pure devotional service can be performed or spread only by a particular caste or clan. This idea is contrary to Lord Caitanya's teachings.

An example of such a clan is the so-called Nityananda Vamsa, who claim to descend from three grandsons of Lord Caitanya's great associate Lord Nityananda. The members

of the Nityananda Vamsa sometimes say that Lord Nityananda's divine essence is carried in their family blood line.

This is mendacious on two counts. First, the ancestors of the Nityananda Vamsa were actually disciples, not sons, of Lord Nityananda's only and childless son, Sri Virabhadra Gosvami. Second, a person is known to be a Vaisnava not by birth from a particular womb but by his character.

Up until the early part of this century, the Nityananda Vamsa held the lower-caste Vaisnavas in a thrall of superstition and wrong teachings.

But beginning in the late 1800's, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura challenged them in his popular Bengali-language books like *Jaiva Dharma* and *Hari Nama Cintamani*. He proclaimed that it is not enough to accept a spiritual master merely on the basis of caste. Before taking initiation, the candidate must be sure that the initiator is fully conversant with the scriptures and can lift his disciples out of ignorance. The *guru* should be of spotless character: if he is addicted to sinful acts, then even those he may have already initiated must reject him.

Bhaktivinoda's books unleashed a wave of reform in Bengal that pushed the *jata-gosani* into a defensive stance. But the confrontation came to open war when his son, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, took over the Gaudiya mission.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati publicly smashed the arguments placed before him by those who held that devotional service was a monopoly of their own caste. Such ideas, he said, were products of "skin disease."

The basic misunderstanding in materialistic life is that the body is the self. Under illusion, one thinks of oneself as American, British, or Indian, young or old, man or woman, white or black. In fact, however, these are merely bodily designations, labels for the skin. And so too are designations of family and caste. To take birth in a high family may offer one an opportunity to become Krsna conscious. But the birth itself is not an automatic guarantee. Nor does birth in a low family exclude one. Anyone who performs pure devotional service to the Lord, regardless of *jati*, or birth, becomes a member of the transcendental family of Lord Sri Krsna. This is Lord Caitanya's teaching.

Smarta-brahmanas

The *Padma Purana*, a text of Vedic teachings, states that if we always remember Visnu or Krsna (*smartavyah satatam visnoh*) before performing our duty, we automatically fulfill all scriptural rules and regulations. If we forget Him, we unavoidably transgress the spirit of the scriptures even if we observe them to the letter, because keeping Krsna always in mind is the purpose of all the scriptural codes of behavior.

Not everyone admits that purpose. There are three classes of *brahmanas*: the *dvija*, the *vipra*, and the Vaisnava. The third-class *dvija* is ritualistically initiated, the second-

class *vipra* is learned in the *Vedas*, and the first-class Vaisnava knows that the goal of the *Vedas* is to always remember Krsna and never forget Him. A *dvija* or *vipra* who is not a devotee can't know the real sense of the rules and regulations of scripture; like a crooked lawyer, he'll use the law to enrich himself materially. The nondevotee *dvija* or *vipra* is what is meant by the term *smarta-brahmana*.

Smarta-brahmanas totally reverse the instruction of the *Padma Purana*: rather than always remember Krsna and thus fulfill the rules and regulations, they remember the rules and regulations and always forget Krsna. The *acara* (behavior) of a strict *smarta-brahmana* and a strict Vaisnava may externally be almost the same, but the consciousness is completely different.

In its subtlest form, the *smarta* contamination is a shift of *values* more than of behavior or even philosophy. *Smarta* values are called *purusarthika*, whereas Vaisnava values are *paramapurusarthika*. The difference between the two is explained by Srila Prabhupada in the *Caitanya-caritamrta* (*Antya* 7.24, Purport):

Purusartha ("the goal of life") generally refers to religion, economic development, satisfaction of the senses, and, finally, liberation. However, above these four kinds of purusarthas, love of Godhead stands supreme. It is called paramapurusartha (the supreme goal of life) or purusartha-siromani (the most exalted of all purusarthas).

Smarta-brahmanas think that one must be born in the *brahmana* caste to be a *guru*. But according to Lord Caitanya, a person from any family, race, color, or creed can be *guru* as long as he or she knows the spiritual science of Krsna consciousness.

The *smartas* also claim the exclusive birthright to worship the *salagrama-sila* (Lord Visnu's form as a black stone, which may be worshiped only by qualified *brahmanas*). And they never marry outside of the *brahmana* caste—this taboo is followed so rigidly that a *smarta* father would rather give his daughter to the son of a priest of the tantric school (which uses black rituals and offerings of meat and wine) than to a non-*brahmana* Vaisnava.

The *smartas* then, are afflicted by upper-caste pride. But although the *jata-gosanis* who overemphasize birthright may also be afflicted by pride, the two communities differ in their mode of worship. Caste *gosvamis* are exclusively priests of Krsna temples; ritualistically, at least, they are Vaisnava *brahmanas*. Caste *brahmanas*, on the other hand, worship according to the Mayavadi *pancopasana* conception. Thus they regard Lord Krsna or Visnu to be one of five forms of Brahman. Of the five (Durga, Ganesa, Surya, Siva, and Visnu), Bengali *smartas* have always preferred goddess Durga because she supplies her devotees with material opulence.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries A.D., the importance of the Bengali *smarta* community was practically nullified by Lord Caitanya's *sankirtana* movement. Among

the great Vaisnava *acaryas* of that period, Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura stands out as the preacher who most cut down their pride.

The *smartas*, considering Narottama just a low-born *kayastha* (the clerical caste in Bengal), became so infuriated at his making disciples from among their ranks that they enlisted the king, Raja Narasimha, and a conquering *pandita* named Sri Rupa Narayana to lead a crusade to somehow expose Acarya Thakura as a fraud. The king, the *pandita*, and a large party of caste *brahmanas* made their way to Kheturi, where Srila Narottama Dasa had his headquarters.

When Sri Ramakrsna Bhattacarya and Sri Ganga Narayana Cakravarti, two Vaisnava *brahmanas*, came to know of the *smarta* conspiracy, they disguised themselves as *sudras* and set up two small shops in the Kumarapura market: one a *pan* and betel nut shop and the other a store selling clay pots.

As the party arrived at Kumarapura, the *smartas* sent their disciples to the market to purchase wares for cooking. When the students came to the shops of Ramakrsna and Ganga Narayana, they were dumfounded to find that these merchants spoke perfect Sanskrit and were eager not to do business but to engage in philosophical disputation. Finding themselves outmatched, the distressed students called for their *gurus*, who arrived on the scene with Raja Narasimha and Rupa Narayana. When the *smartas* fared no better than their disciples, Rupa Narayana himself was drawn into the debate and was soundly defeated.

The king demanded they introduce themselves. The two shopkeepers humbly submitted that they were low-born and insignificant disciples of Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura Mahasaya. Shamed, Rupa Narayana and the *smarta-brahmanas* lost interest in proceeding to Kheturi. They returned immediately to their respective homes.

That night, Raja Narasimha had a dream in which an angry Durga Devi threatened him with a chopper used for killing goats. Glaring at him with blazing eyes, the goddess said, "Narasimha! Because you greatly offended Narottama Dasa Thakura, I shall have to cut you to pieces! If you want to save yourself, then you had better immediately go and take shelter at his lotus feet."

His sleep broken, the frightened king quickly bathed and set out for Kheturi. Arriving there at last, he was surprised to meet the *pandita* Rupa Narayana, who sheepishly explained that he'd had a similar dream. They went to the temple of Sri Gauranga to meet Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura.

Acarya Thakura was absorbed in his devotions, but when a disciple informed him of the arrival of the two guests, he came out to meet them. Simply by seeing his transcendental form, the two offenders became purified and fell down to offer their obeisances at the Thakura's lotus feet. Finally he initiated them with the Radha-Krsna *mantra*.

Because their leaders had become Vaisnavas, many lesser *smartas* thought it fashionable to externally adopt Vaisnava customs. This is how the *smarta apasampradaya*, or Vaisnavism compromised by caste brahmanism, began.

In the late nineteenth century a well-known member of this community claimed to be the incarnation of Rama, Krsna, and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He established a missionary movement that preached the worship of Kali-Krsna, a concocted deity blending the forms of goddess Kali and Sri Krsna.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura soundly defeated the *smarta apasampradaya* at the town of Valighai Uddharanapura, West Bengal, in September 1911. He presented a work in which he conclusively argued the superiority of Vaisnavas to *brahmanas*. He read the paper before a gathering of more than ten thousand *panditas*, and though he was the youngest speaker present, the judges acclaimed Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati the winner of the dispute.

Nowadays, the *smarta-brahmana* community of Bengal has largely succumbed to secularism and exerts little influence in spiritual affairs.

Suhotra Swami, an American disciple of Srila Prabhupada, has taught Krsna consciousness in Europe since the mid-seventies. He was recently appointed ISKCON's Governing Body Commissioner for Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and Czechoslovakia.

Back to Godhead Magazine

Volume 25, Number 04, 1991

Deviant Vaisnava Sects

*Some who say they follow
Lord Caitanya try to make His easy method easier—
by throwing out the rules.*

By Suhotra Swami

Part Two: Prakṛta-sahajiyas

The great spiritual master Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura spoke of thirteen sects that claim to have inherited Lord Caitanya's mission but who distort His teachings. Although especially prominent in Bengal, their ideas show up even in the West. Here, therefore, in the second of a three-part series, Suhotra Swami continues to examine these sects.

VAISNAVAS, devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, use the term *prakṛta-sahajīya* to refer to persons who imitate the signs of *prema*, pure love for God, while still addicted to the low-class pleasures of illicit sex and intoxication. The *sahajīyas* imagine that they feel the divine emotions of Kṛṣṇa and His dearest devotee, Srimatī Rādhārāṇī. Yet they don't understand that before we can savor the pleasure shared by Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, we must rid ourselves of lustful desires for sensual pleasure.

The word *sahaja* means "easy." A *prakṛta-sahajīya* wants the bliss of spiritual life without the struggle to attain it. And the word *prakṛta* means "materialistic." Because the *sahajīyas* forgo the standard disciplines of *bhakti-yoga*, the divine love they apparently show never gets beyond material lust.

The *prakṛta-sahajīyas* mistake lust—the disease of the soul—for spiritual advancement. So instead of curing lust, they wind up cultivating it.

Bhagavad-gīta (16.23-24) recommends that we follow *śāstra-vidhī*, the directions of the scriptures, to purify ourselves of lust. *Śāstra-vidhī* especially calls for us to give up meat-eating, illicit sex, gambling, and intoxication and to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *maha-mantra*. This gradually readies us for *raḡa-marga*, the path of natural attraction to Kṛṣṇa, reserved for highly advanced devotees.

The *prakṛta-sahajīyas*, however, go easy on the scriptural regulations. They stay attached to materialistic enjoyment of the senses. But this sense enjoyment blinds them, and therefore their ideas of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa's devotees, Kṛṣṇa's service, and love of Kṛṣṇa are but a faulty creation of their lower nature.

According to the Bengali historian Dr. S. B. Das Gupta, the Bengali *sahajīya* movement can be traced back long before the time of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, to the reign of the Buddhist Pāla dynasty (c. A.D. 700-1100). At that time a secret cult of the name Sahajayana arose within the Vajrayana ("Diamond Vehicle") school of Buddhism.

Sahajayana Buddhists abandoned ritualism and study of scriptures as useless. They practiced a "yoga of sex" in which they took consciousness to be the unity of the male and female principles, sometimes called *upaya* and *prajna*, or *karuna* and *sunyata*. The Sahajayana Buddhists wrote many songs, known as the Caryapadas, expressing their philosophy in mysterious language.

Later, under the Sena kings, Vaisnavism became ascendant in Bengal when the great spiritual master Jayadeva Gosvami won royal patronage for it. The Buddhist *sahajīyas* then absorbed aspects of Vaisnava philosophy and twisted them. They renamed their *upaya* and *prajna* principles "Kṛṣṇa" and "Rādhā," imagining Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa to represent the highest state of bliss attained by men and women on the *sahajīya* path.

In the thirteenth century, with the Islamic occupation of northern India and Bengal, the *sahajīyas* were influenced by the practices and philosophy of the Sufis. The word *sufi* comes from the Arabic word *ṣaf*, meaning "sacred," and it signifies a mystical Islamic

order of mendicants. Their goal is a state of inspiration called *fana*, or oneness in love with Allah.

Sufis seek to attain *fana* through song and dance. In the Middle Ages they faced persecution as heretics in Arabic countries, especially because some Sufi preachers announced that they were themselves the very Allah worshiped by all Muslims. But in India the Sufis could flourish, not in the least because their ideas had much in common with Mayavada, or impersonalistic, philosophy.

The sixteenth century saw the advent of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His movement of *sankirtana*, congregational chanting of the holy names of God.

In a typical social blur, the *sahajiyas* who had arisen from the Buddhists and merged with the Sufis now sang and danced on the fringes of the *sankirtana* movement. There they celebrated their mundane sexual mysticism with song and dance.

This, of course, was a perversion of the *sankirtana* movement. So Lord Caitanya and His followers rejected the *sahajiyas*. This is evident in *Sri Caitanya-caritamrta*, which tells us how strictly Lord Caitanya followed the rules of celibacy and how sternly He dealt with those devotees who broke them.

By the 1700's, however, the great movement begun by Lord Caitanya appeared to have become corrupted by the caste *gosvamis* and the ritualistic *smarta brahmanas* [see the May/June issue of BTG]. This offered a chance for the *sahajiyas* to influence the common people, and various *prakṛta-sahajiya* sects became popular.

In the next century, therefore, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura took pains to distinguish the pure teachings of Lord Caitanya from *prakṛta-sahajiya* perversions. Following his example, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati strongly opposed those who deviated from Lord Caitanya's teachings. And Srila Prabhupada kept to this same strong, uncompromising course.

As Srila Prabhupada mentions in his commentary on *Caitanya-caritamrta*, the *sahajiyas* "indulge in sense gratification in the name of devotional service." In this way they "throw mud into transcendence." They churn their materialistic emotions into a state of sentimental ecstasy, and this they take to be spiritual. But the first step in spiritual advancement is to distinguish between spirit and matter. The *sahajiyas* confuse the two.

"The name of Kṛṣṇa is all-powerful," the *sahajiyas* say. "So the spiritual state of a *guru* and disciple at initiation doesn't matter, because the holy name works by its own power. There's no need to tell anyone to follow rules—let them chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, smoke, drink, gamble, and have sex. The holy name will cleanse them of sinful reactions."

Genuine spiritual masters reject such notions as offenses to the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. The holy name of the Lord is certainly all-powerful, just as a fire is powerful. But fire can give life, and fire can kill. So too, the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, properly chanted under the

guidance of a spiritual master, burns up the devotee's lingering material attachments. It nourishes his spiritual life. But if the power of the holy name is used as a tool to mix spiritual life with intoxication and illicit sex, the effect is ruinous.

Another feature of the *sahajiya* attitude is its perverse "humility" (really just envy). The *sahajiyas* consider themselves simple and modest and the strict devotees haughty. For example, *sahajiyas* think that a devotee who becomes known for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness has fallen into the grip of name and fame. A devotee who refutes atheists and materialists is proud. Congregational singing of the Lord's holy names is showy. Devotees fussy about giving up illicit sex, smoking, and other harmless enjoyments are fanatical and inwardly attached to these pleasures.

Sahajiyas look down on devotees who take disciples and train them in scriptural principles. The scriptures, the *sahajiyas* think, oppose true devotion. So the *sahajiyas* either interpret the scriptures in their own way or write new scriptures to prove that sex and intoxication promote rather than obstruct spiritual awareness.

In summary, *prakṛta-sahajiyas* are stubborn sense enjoyers. They may have talents for singing, dancing, acting, speaking, joking, and seducing women or men. They may try to pass off these talents as spiritual accomplishments. And they may dress as Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. But in fact they can't see the difference between offensive and pure chanting of the holy name. They take worldly service to be devotional service, lust to be love, and illusion to be spirituality.

Gauranga Nagaris

The *gauranga nagaris* are a type of *sahajiya* who mix moods of devotion (*rasas*) in a clashing, unpalatable way. This error is technically called *rasabhasa*. The *gauranga nagaris* are prominent in Bengal and Bangladesh.

Some of their customs seem praiseworthy. For example, like staunch Vaisnavas they wear *tilaka* and neckbeads, perform good *kirtana*, and strictly abstain from flesh and fish. But they are counted out of Lord Caitanya's disciplic line because of a subtle contamination in their idea of who Lord Caitanya is.

The *gauranga-nagaris* are devotees of Lord Caitanya, who is also known as Gauranga ("the golden-limbed Lord"). But they impose upon Him Kṛṣṇa's role as the free enjoyer of the village girls of Vṛndavana. They style Him as *nagara* (a lusty village youth) and themselves as *nagari* (village girls).

Yet although it is true that Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa Himself, His mood is never that of Kṛṣṇa, the supreme enjoyer, but always that of Kṛṣṇa's devotee.

In the *Caitanya-caritamṛta* (Adi 1.5), Lord Gauranga is said to be golden because He is *radha-bhava-dyuti-suvalita*, "adorned with the mood and luster of Srimati Radharani,"

Krsna's foremost devotee. Nowhere in any revealed scripture is it said that Lord Caitanya descends with the mood of Krsna.

Spokesmen for the *gauranga-nagaris* not only say that Lord Caitanya exhibited Krsna's enjoying mood; they say that Visnupriya Devi, the Lord's second wife, was Srimati Radharani and that her close female friends were *gopis*.

But as Srila Vrndavana dasa Thakura makes clear in *Sri Caitanya Bhagavata*, Visnupriya Devi is actually a form of the goddess of fortune, Laksmi. The wives, mothers, and daughters of Lord Caitanya's associates attended Visnupriya just as the maidservants of Laksmi serve Laksmi in the spiritual world. They serve in awe and reverence, not in the informal mood of the *gopis*.

Sri Caitanya Bhagavata also speaks clearly about Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's extreme gravity in His dealings with women—even with His own wives, what to speak of other women. But the *gauranga nagaris* have invented offensive myths about Lord Caitanya's supposed love affairs. These stories should never be heard.

The so-called mood of devotion of the *gauranga nagaris* is mere eroticism. Their conception of Lord Gauranga is a creation of their impure minds, and as they meditate upon this wrong conception, they succumb to lust. But, following the *sahajiya* line, they take that lust to be spiritual ecstasy.

Sakhi Bekhi and Cuda Dhari

Sakhi is a term for the confidential girlfriends of Srimati Radharani. The word *bekhi* is a corruption of the Sanskrit word *vesa*, which means "dress." A *sakhi bekh* is a man or a woman who dresses like a *gopi* and imagines himself or herself to be enjoyed by Krsna.

*Sakhi bekh*s imitate *rasa-lila*, Krsna's dance with the *gopis*, sometimes by dancing with a person dressed like Krsna who wears a *cuda*, a crown of peacock feathers. This person is called *cuda dhari*. The philosophy of these two types of *sahajiya* groups is the same. Practically the only difference is that one group dresses like *gopis* and the other like Krsna.

Lord Caitanya taught, "The only controller is Krsna; everyone else is His servant." Each spirit soul is a tiny spark of *para-prakrti*, the Lord's subordinate or female spiritual energy. But this sense of our "being female" has nothing to do with mundane gender. We have temporarily assumed a male or female body as a result of past *karma*; the material covering does not reflect the eternal nature of the soul.

From *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (Canto 4, Chapter 28) we learn that souls now in men's bodies received them as a karmic result of earlier lives when they were women with a lusty attachment to men. And those now in women's bodies were men too attached to women.

The soul as a spiritual spark caught in the cycle of birth and death is genderless. But according to the particular ecstasy a soul enjoys in relation to Kṛṣṇa, the soul's transcendental gender is revealed.

We see this in the spiritual bodies of Kṛṣṇa's eternal associates. Kṛṣṇa's devotees who serve Kṛṣṇa with motherly and fatherly affection, for instance, have transcendental bodies accordingly. And the same is true of those who serve Kṛṣṇa in *madhurya-rasa* (conjugal love). To be placed in *madhurya-rasa* one must develop the sentiments of a *gopi*, or cowherd damsel, under the guidance of a highly realized Vaisnava.

In *Caitanya-caritamṛta* (*Madhya* 22.156-158), Lord Caitanya clearly tells Sanātana Gosvami how an advanced devotee is to use the physical body in Kṛṣṇa's service. Externally, the devotee should perform regular devotional practices, such as hearing and chanting the holy name. Obeying all the scriptural rules, he or she should strictly avoid sinful life. And it is internally—within the purified, self-realized mind—that the devotee always meditates on serving Kṛṣṇa in Vrndavana in a particular *rasa*, or relationship.

The *sakhi bekhis*, however, seem to think they have found an easier way. They dress in *saris*, decorate themselves with nose-rings and ornaments, and grow their hair in long braids. They paint their feet red, shave their faces twice a day, sing in falsetto voices, and gesture with women's mannerisms. And they seem to think that this will please Kṛṣṇa.

Cuda dharis similarly think they can attract Srimati Rādhārāṇī to their rotting material bodies simply because they dress like Kṛṣṇa.

Some *sakhi bekhis* say they are only following the example of Śrī Gadādhara Dāsa Thākura. This devotee of Lord Caitanya's (a different person from the well-known Gadādhara Paṇḍita) once walked through town in the mood of a *gopi*, carrying a clay pot of Ganges water on his head, calling out to sell yogurt, and laughing loudly. This, however, was an unusual ecstatic incident in the life of a pure devotee; it was not his regular practice.

Imitators say they can see their internal spiritual form by external play-acting. They forget, however, that neither Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu nor any spiritual master in Lord Caitanya's line ever taught that one can awaken love for Kṛṣṇa through speculative histrionics.

Śrīla Prabhupada once told a story to show how we must follow the method of *bhakti-yoga* to get love for Kṛṣṇa. In the story, a man tried to cook by placing the flame on the floor and hanging the pot near the ceiling. "If you want to cook," Prabhupada said, "you have to cook according to the method. You may have a pot and you may have a flame, but if you don't cook by the method, you'll never get the food."

The *sakhi bekhis* and *cuda dharis* take Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis* cheaply. Under the influence of impersonalism, they think they can become one with the Lord and the *gopis* through some imaginative meditation. But the scriptures say that even Lakṣmī, the

goddess of fortune herself in her eternal form, can't enter the *rasa-lila*, despite ages of austerity. So how can a fool do so by merely dressing up the material body?

Suhotra Swami, an American disciple of Srila Prabhupada, has taught Krsna consciousness in Europe since the mid-seventies. He was recently appointed ISKCON's Governing Body Commissioner for Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and Czechoslovakia.

Back to Godhead Magazine

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Deviant Vaisnava Sects

Sex, drugs, and the teachings of Lord Caitanya. No, they don't go together as some would have us think.

by Suhotra Swami

Part Three: Ativadi, Aula, Baula, Sain, and Daravesa

Ativadi

In the early 1870's Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, as a deputy magistrate stationed at the holy city of Jagannatha Puri, arrested, judged, and jailed a self-styled incarnation of Maha-Visnu named Bisa Kisen. Bisa Kisen, by his mystic power, used to lean into fire and then lift his head and make flames come out of his hair. He had two companions who presented themselves as Brahma and Siva.

Many wealthy and influential Hindus of Orissa came under Bisa Kisen's sway. They sent him money to build a temple and provided him women for his "*rasa-lila*." Bisa Kisen belonged to the Ativadi-*apasampradaya*.

In a letter dated August 18, 1871, addressed to the editor of *Progress*, a newspaper in Cuttack, Orissa, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura described the origin, philosophy, and practices of the Ativadi sect. The Ativadis claim to be Vaisnavas, but they are quite opposed to the principles of Vaisnavism. What follows is a synopsis of the most pertinent points of Bhaktivinoda's letter, along with other details gleaned from *Apasampradaya-svarupa*, a Bengali booklet by Bhakti-vilasa Bharati Maharaja.

The Ativadi *apasampradaya* (spurious sect) was started by one Jagannatha Dasa when Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu stayed at Puri as a *sannyasi*. Jagannatha Dasa pretended

to be a disciple of Srila Haridasa Thakura, one of Lord Caitanya's close associates. But he later broke his connection with the Thakura and began preaching his own ideas. For instance, he had his followers cover their mouths while chanting the *maha-mantra* and told them to chant the second half (Hare Rama) first.

Once Jagannatha Dasa arrogantly approached Lord Caitanya, ignoring Svarupa Damodara Gosvami, who would screen visitors so that they might not disturb the Lord. Jagannatha Dasa wished to recite his Oriya translation of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, which included five chapters of his own invention. He also wanted to explain his independent manner of chanting Hare Krsna.

To avoid him, Lord Caitanya said, "A fallen soul like Me is not worthy to hear the *Bhagavatam* composed by an author like you."

Then Jagannatha Dasa declared Lord Caitanya to be Krsna, and himself Radharani.

The Lord replied, "Sir, you have become too great [*ativadi*]. An insignificant and fallen soul like Me can have nothing to do with you."

Jagannatha Dasa and his followers took the Lord's statement as praise instead of what it really was—condemnation. Thus this *apasampradaya* views itself as more well-read in the scriptures than Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His associates, and likewise better in judgment and logic.

Jagannatha Dasa had a sweet singing voice, which attracted women whom he engaged in massaging his body. When brought to the court of King Prataparudra for indecent behavior, he said to the king, "I don't see any difference between men and women." For conduct unbecoming a Vaisnava *sadhu*, or saintly person, the king had him imprisoned.

Jagannatha Dasa and his followers had been living in an *asrama* donated by the king. But when Jagannatha Dasa rejected Haridasa Thakura and started his own movement, the property was taken back. He then founded his own *asrama* on the seashore. It is called the Satlahari Matha and can still be seen today.

Ativadi priests sometimes dress up as women on certain religious occasions, and they are known for loosely mixing with women. The Ativadis are influential in Orissa because Jagannatha Dasa's translation of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is widely read, especially by simple, indiscriminating people.

The Ativadis appear very devoted to Lord Jagannatha, the famous form of Krsna worshiped in the Puri temple. They proudly claim that Lord Jagannatha has personally revealed some truth or prophecy to them. Thus every respected Ativadi can recite what he will speak of as his Malika, or series of revelations from the Lord. A common prediction is the year the world will end.

Yet despite the devotion the Ativadis profess for Lord Jagannatha, the scriptures they received from their founder put forward many impersonal ideas. Though the Ativadis worship the Lord's form in the temple, they believe that when they die they will realize Him as formless. Worshiper and worshiped will then merge into oneness.

Ativadis are mystics who practice *yoga* and sometimes work magic to cure diseases and bring people under their control. They form a secret brotherhood, Bhaktivinoda Thakura says, like the Freemasons in the West, and use drugs like marijuana and opium. Bhaktivinoda Thakura reckoned there were fifteen thousand of them in Orissa during his stay there. He noted that they often engaged in conspiracies against the government.

Bisa Kisen was only one of many self-proclaimed *avatars* hailing from this *apasampradaya*. Lord Caitanya taught, *avatara nahi kahe ami avatara*: "The real incarnation of the Lord never claims to be one."

Aula, Baula, Sani (Sain), and Daravesa

These four *apasampradayas* are closely related. They may be regarded as divisions of one group, commonly called "the Baulas of Bengal." Heavily tantric, with Sufi leanings, they don't necessarily present themselves as Vaisnavas, though they claim to embody the real spirit of Lord Caitanya's movement.

The Aulas, Baulas, Sains, and Daravesa share the same philosophy, which directly descends from the Sahajayana tantric Buddhist tradition. They view all existence as being formed from the combination of the mundane male and female principles (*purusa* and *prakrti*). They can harmonize these two principles within themselves, they believe, through so-called love generated by the bodily union of man and woman through tantric *yoga*. When *purusa* and *prakrti* are perfectly harmonized, one realizes the inner ecstasy they call *jiyante mara*, or "death while living," signified by complete stoppage of all physical and mental activity.

They identify this state with the *mahabhava* ecstasy of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. When this state is attained, they say, one can know the *maner manush*—the "man in the heart," also known as *sahaja manush* ("natural man"), *bhaber manush* ("man of devotion"), *raser manush* ("man of *rasa*"), and *sonar manush* ("man of gold").

These four sects believe that all exalted states of transcendence, like the realization of Vaikuntha and Krsnaloka, rest in the physical body. Their motto is "What cannot be found in the body cannot be found anywhere." Without going into details of their practices, suffice it to say that this philosophy encourages a person to release the "inner bliss" stored in the body through degraded acts of lust and depravity.

These *apasampradayas* are syncretic in that they combine aspects of different religious disciplines—Vaisnava, Mayavadi, tantric, and Islamic. And because they reject Deity worship they are iconoclastic.

The word *aula* has different meanings, either of Arabic or Bengali origin. The Persian word *aul* (from the Arabic *wallia*) means "very important person," signifying the supposed exalted status of a member of the cult of Aulas. Also from the Islamic world is the word *auttal*, "the first phase." This indicates that of the four sects the Aulas are on the first stage of advancement because they are married householders.

Another meaning of Aula is *au* ("woman") and *ula* ("come down"). This meaning points to their close connection to women, through whom they think descends deeper wisdom of the universe. In Bengali the word *aul* is related to *kulata* ("afflicted") in the sense of being afflicted with love. For instance, in the *Caitanya-caritamṛta* the word *aulaya* denotes the *gopis'* affliction with love for Kṛṣṇa.

The Aulas practice what is termed "bodily meditation." This means that the men of this sect take themselves to be *purusa*, and women to be *prakṛti*. Their path to perfection is illicit sex. Husbands and wives of this community freely switch partners. Their idea is to excite their senses to a fever pitch so they can attain divine love. They claim that Lord Caitanya, Lord Nityananda, and the six Gosvamis were all "*auliya*," and they use citations from *Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta* to try to substantiate their claim.

But Lord Caitanya's teachings clearly distinguish between love and lust. *Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta* (Adi 4.165) defines love, or *prema*, as eagerness to please Kṛṣṇa, whereas lust is the eagerness to gratify one's senses. By this definition, the practices of the Aulas are simply lust and have no connection with authorized scriptures.

The influence of Mayavadi philosophy on the Aula sect is marked. The Vaisnava scriptures say that Kṛṣṇa is the only transcendental *purusa*. But the Aulas say that if one happens to have a male form he too is *purusa* and so may imitate Kṛṣṇa's activities with impunity.

The word *baula* comes from the Sanskrit word *vatula*, or "mad." It may also be related to the word *vyakula*, which means "impatiently eager."

The Baulas are wandering minstrels who play instruments like the single-stringed *ektar*, the *dugi* (a drum like the larger drum in a tabla set), and the bamboo flute. They publicly chant the names of Kṛṣṇa and sing enchanting songs with enigmatic words.

The Baulas, being folk musicians, exert an extraordinary influence on Bengali culture. They were patronized by no less than Rabindranath Tagore, Bengal's Nobel Prize-winning poet. Bengali intellectuals are fascinated with them and have written many books to their glory. In recent years, this kind of sophisticated regard for the Baulas has spread to the West. Baulas have even performed in London's Albert Hall.

Baulas often keep long hair in a bun atop their heads and adorn their foreheads with *tilaka*. They may wear the gown of a Muslim fakir and wear on their necks Shaivaite *rudraksa* beads, the glass worry beads of a Muslim, and the *japa* beads of a Vaisnava. They are usually bearded and carry a shoulder bag, a bamboo walking cane, and a *fisti* (a

pot made from a big coconut). They have been known to use hashish liberally for "self-control."

The Baulas typically flock to festivals they call *mahotsabs*, many of which coincide with important Gaudiya Vaisnava functions. The Jayadeva Mela each winter in Kenduli, in Bengal, is the largest such *mahotsab*. The Baulas have an *akhra* (or *asrama*) there, and thousands of them converge at that spot for the three-day festival.

At other places across Bengal and Bangladesh they hold *mahotsabs* throughout the year. The Baulas move from one to the next, perform music, smoke hemp, and look for women. Often a Baula picks up a woman (or *sadhika*) at one *mahotsab* and drops her at the next to take on a new one. His former *sadhika* will be picked up by another Baula.

Some Baulas write books presenting perverted accounts of the lives of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His associates. Because of their talents, the Baulas cast over the minds of the innocent populace a spell that the Vaisnavas regard as extremely inauspicious.

The word *sani* comes from *svami* (master). The Sani group is more commonly known as the Sain. They are mendicants who wander about without following any particular discipline, having supposedly renounced all external designations.

Supposedly liberated from all material conceptions, the Sains may appear in any kind of dress (Hindu *sannyasi* or Muslim fakir) or no dress at all. They are so much beyond the grip of illusion that they may drink wine or eat human flesh as expressions of their high awareness. Many Sains maintain themselves by distributing mysterious medicines and cures.

The Daravesa (Darbesh) are the *gurus* of the Aulas, Baulas, and Sains. They are supposed to have reached the highest realization through tantric practice. *Darbesh* is a Sufi term, from the Persian *dar* ("door") and *bhitan* ("to beg"), meaning "one who begs from door to door."

The Darbesh Ashram in Dubrajpur, West Bengal, was founded by Atal Behari Darbesh, known simply as Darbeshji. It is said that by his mystic feats he brought a king under his control. The king gave him the land on which the *asrama* is situated. The Aulas, Baulas, and Sains venerate Darbeshji as a spiritual giant.

The followers of Darbeshji dress as they imagine Sanatana Gosvami was dressed when he escaped the jail of Nawab Hussain Shah to join Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in Prayaga. Sanatana told the jailer, whom he'd bribed for his release, "I shall go to Mecca as a *daravesa* [renunciant]." The Darbesh cult takes this as Srila Sanatana Gosvami's most profound instruction.

[Part Four of this series will appear in our next issue.]

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Back to Godhead Magazine

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Deviant Vaisnava Sects

The weeds of deviation—choking the plant of bhakti—take firm root in offenses to the holy name.

By Suhotra Swami

Part Four: Kartabhaja and Neda-Nedi

Kartabhaja

Worshippers of Guru as God

In India people generally associate the Kartabhaja *apasampradaya* (deviant sect) with the Baulas of Bengal (another deviant sect). The Kartabhajas and the Baulas are indeed similar in many ways. They share, for example, the concept of *jiyante mara*—living death—as the highest goal.

But the Kartabhajas are distinguished by their doctrine of *guruvada*. All the deviant tantric sects have a philosophy of *guruvada*, or veneration of the guru, but only the Kartabhajas go to the extreme of proclaiming the guru to be God incarnate. Kartabhaja *guruvada* arises from the Mayavadi idea of absolute oneness. For the Kartabhajas, the guru alone is the worshipable form of God. No other form than the guru's is worshipable, not even that of the *arca-murti*, the temple Deity. The Kartabhajas chant no name other than the name of the guru. They do chant the name Krsna, but only because they say that the guru is Krsna. And for the Kartabhajas the names of Krsna and Khoda (Allah) are just as good, because all are names of the guru.

The Kartabhaja sect was founded by Karta Baba Aul Cand, a fakir who lived from 1686 to 1779. His followers say he was the reappearance of Lord Caitanya Himself. Aul Cand's principal disciples were Karta Ram Sharan Pal and his wife, Sati. The Kartabhajas consider them *adi purusa* (the original man) and *adyasakti* (the original woman). Their house in Ghosepara, in the Nadia district of Bengal, is preserved as a Kartabhaja place of

pilgrimage. Nowadays, many Baulas come to the the Ghosepara Kartabhaja center during the three-day Dola Yatra festival. This may be why many people associate the Kartabhajas with the Baulas.

The Kartabhajas have their own scripture, the *Bhaver Gita*, mostly written by Dulalcand in the form of songs. The text is puzzling and deliberately contradictory: it is to be understood only by initiates. Yet it clearly hints at Mayavadi and tantric ideas. The Kartabhajas, unlike the Baulas, do not have a reputation for promiscuity. They are enjoined to marry and be true to their partners. On Fridays (the Muslim sabbath) they must refrain from sexual relations and be vegetarian.

In the last century, the Kartabhajas were a powerful force against the *jata-gosani* and *smartas*, who had become the sedentary establishment of Gaudiya Vaisnavism. The Kartabhajas and other *sahajiya* groups converted thousands of common folk on the plea that "the company" (the Gaudiya Vaisnavas) was once rich but now bankrupt. Out of the ruins of the old company, the Kartabhajas said, a new company had arisen (the Kartabhajas themselves). And this company, they said, did not carry out business in the name of religion.

In 1893, Karta Dulalcand, a famous Kartabhaja songwriter and guru, was invited to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago (where Vivekananda lectured). But the invitation was a little late: Dulalcand had already been dead sixty years.

The Kartabhajas address their gurus, beginning with Karta Ram Sharan Pal, as Karta ("master" or "boss"). All the Kartas have lived at the residence of the first Karta and run the Kartabhaja mission from there. The faithful followers of the Kartas are called Baratis, "members of the bridegroom's party." The Baratis accept and worship the Karta as God on earth. Whatever words he speaks are themselves scripture, to be blindly obeyed. His activities are divine, even if he dances naked at a wedding of his disciples, as did Karta Baba Aul Cand.

The Kartabhajas say that deceased Kartas continue to initiate disciples through living representatives known as *rtviks*.

Neda or Neda- Nedi Vaisnava-Buddhist Syncretists

Neda means a shaven-headed man, *nedi* a shaven-headed woman. Members of the *Neda- Nedi* sect can be seen in the area of Navadvipa, West Bengal. They resemble other Vaisnavas, with shaved heads, *tilaka*, and white clothes.

It is said that Sri Virabhadra Gosvami, the son of Lord Nityananda and Jahnava-mata, converted more than a thousand Nedas and a thousand Nedis to Vaisnavism from tantric Buddhism. Under his direction, they took to the chanting of the Hare Krsna *maha-mantra*. Most of them accepted marriage, ending their indulgence in illicit sex, which they held to be tantric meditation. But after some time, a number of them resumed their

old practices while claiming to be Vaisnavas. Nowadays, the Neda- Nedi is taken to be a type of Baula.

Conclusion

In the first part of this series, I mentioned that a genuine devotee of Krsna is known by his good qualities. Because the Vedic scriptures prescribe the chanting of the holy name of Krsna as the essential *dharma*, or spiritual practice, in the present age, a devotee of Krsna is to be known especially by the quality of his chanting.

As Srila Prabhupada explained, "Nobody can strictly follow all the rules and regulations. In the Kali-yuga [the Age of Degradation] it is not possible. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu has recommended that *hari-nama*, chanting of the Hare Krsna *mantra*, should be very rigidly performed."

A person may advertise himself as a follower of Lord Caitanya's and chant the Hare Krsna *maha-mantra*, but if he deliberately commits *namaparadhas* (offenses to the holy name) he disqualifies himself.

The link between *namaparadhas* and deviation from the path of Krsna consciousness is indicated by Srila Jiva Gosvami. He warns in his *Bhakti-sandarbha* that there are offenders to the holy name who are *acikitsya*, or incorrigible (*jnana-lava-durvidagdhastra-acikitsya-atva-dupeksa*). As soon as they acquire a little knowledge from the Krsna conscious community of devotees, they become insolent and arrogant. They are excluded from the genuine devotional community because of three kinds of offense to the holy name: *sadhu-ninda* (blasphemy of devotees), *guru-avajna* (disregard of the spiritual master), and *sruti-sastra ninda* (blasphemy of the Vedic scriptures).

The incorrigible offender never admits his offenses. He cannot understand that the mercy of the spiritual master and the association of pure devotees are indispensable for the chanting of the holy name. He considers the spiritual master not a transcendental teacher but a worldly one and tries to measure the person and instructions of the *guru* by his own mental standards. Thus he commits *guru-avajna*. Because he values worldly knowledge and accomplishments, he looks down upon the simple devotees who have surrendered themselves to devotional service. Thus he commits *sadhu-ninda*. Finally, he studies the revealed scriptures as if they were ordinary books, accepting whatever seems to support his preconceived notions and rejecting the rest. Thus he commits *sruti-sastra ninda* (blasphemy of the Vedic scriptures).

The incorrigible offender mistakes the growth of these and other offenses within his heart for the growth of the *bhakti-lata* (the plant of devotion). He mistakes his fallen condition for great advancement. Such is the illusion from which the *apasampradayas*, or deviant sects, have sprung.

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Governing Body Commissioner for Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and Czechoslovakia.

Author's Note

In preparing this series, I have drawn from a number of sources. The most important are the books, letters, and lectures of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. I drew a great deal upon *Apasampradaya Svarupa*, a work by one of Srila Prabhupada's Godbrothers, Sri Bhakti-vilasa Bharati Maharaja. This was translated for me from the Bengali by Bhakta Krishanu Lahiri, a student of languages at Calcutta University and a member of Bhaktivedanta Youth Services. Krishanu was ably assisted by Sriman Sarvabhavana Prabhu and Kishore Ghosh. I consulted *The History and Literature of the Gaudiya Vaisnavas*, an unpublished manuscript by another Godbrother of Srila Prabhupada's, Sambidananda Dasa. I also consulted the following books: *Vaisnavism in Bengal*, by Dr. Ramkantha Cakravarti (Sanskrit Pushtak Bandhar, Calcutta, 1985), *Obscure Religious Cults*, by Dr. Sashi Bhushan Das Gupta (1976 reprint by Firma KLM Ltd.), *The Bauls of Bengal*, by Rebati Mohan Sarkar (Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990), and *Braj—Center of Krishna Pilgrimage*, by Alan W. Entwistle (Egbert Forsten, Holland, 1987). Sri Bhakti Vikasa Swami Maharaja and Kiranasa Prabhu brought me up to date on the modern deviant sects they have encountered in their years in Bangladesh.