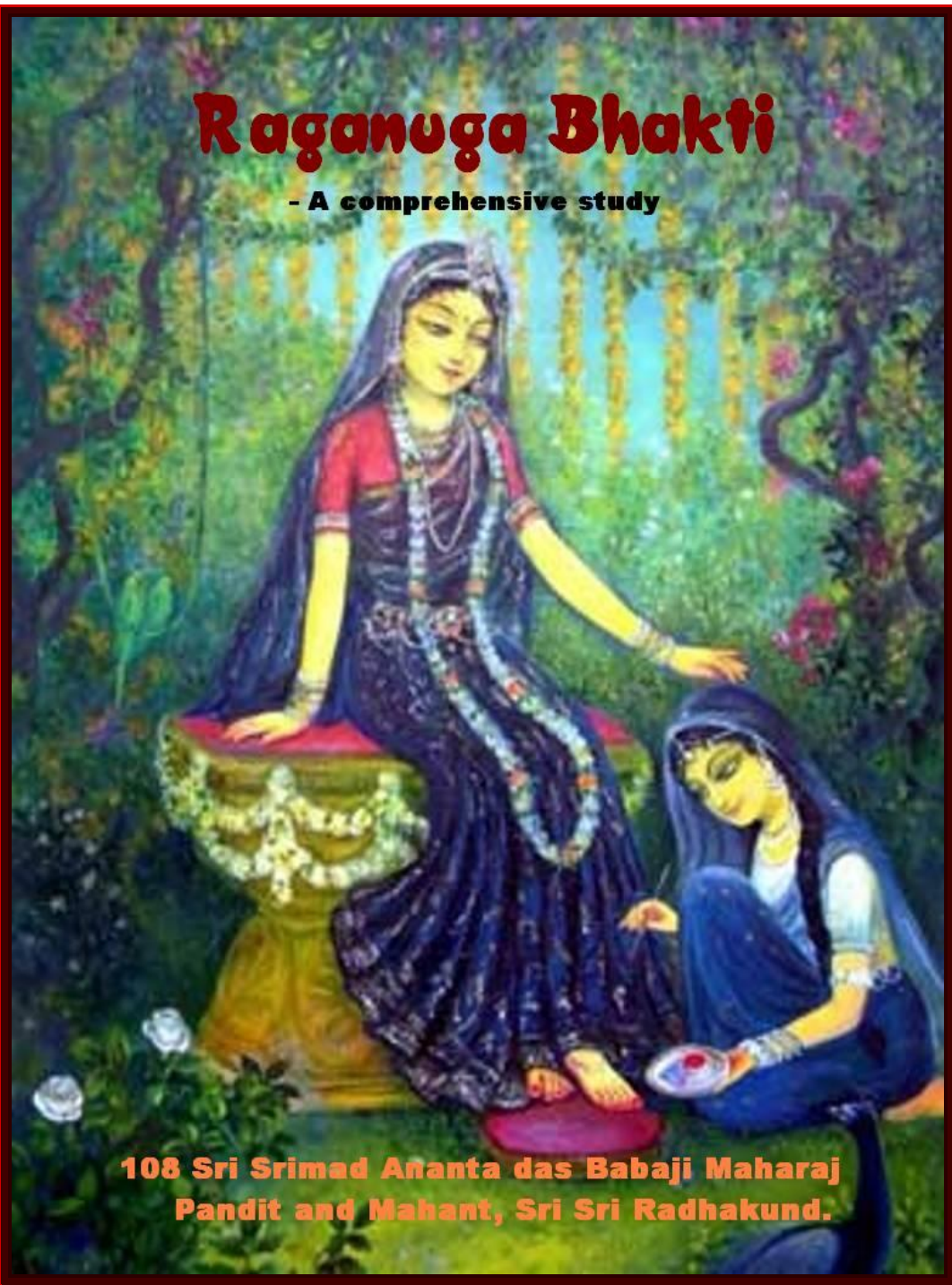


Raganuga Bhakti

- A comprehensive study



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Raganuga-Bhakti

- a comprehensive study

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What is Râgânugâ bhakti ?

We have learnt about *sâdhan-bhakti* in the chapter 'A Scientific Study of Bhakti '. *Sâdhan-bhakti* is of two types -

- *Vaidhi*
- *Râgânugâ*

Vaidhi bhakti is when we perform *bhakti* because of scriptural injunctions, while *Râgânugâ bhakti* has only one qualification - greed. When we are greedy for Sri Krishna-prem and this is the sole reason why practice *bhakti* then we call it *Râgânugâ bhakti*.

When we practice *bhakti* following in the footsteps of *Râgâtmikâ bhakti* we can say we are performing *Râgânugâ bhakti*. Hence if we want to know what *Râgânugâ bhakti* is, first of all we have to learn what *Râgâtmikâ bhakti* is. Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd has define *Râgâtmikâ bhakti* as follows -

*"ishte swârasiki râgah param-âvishtatâ bhavet,
tanmayee yâ bhaved-bhaktih sâtra râgâtmikoditâ."*

Meaning - "When one has natural loving and extremely strong thirst for Sri Krishna that makes one supremely absorbed in Him - it is called '*râg*', and that *râg-bhakti* is '*Râgâtmikâ bhakti*.'" - (B.R.S.)

"Very loving and strong thirst for Sri Krishna is the main characteristic of *râg-bhakti* while absorption in Him is the secondary symptom."
- (C.C.Madhyā.22.86)

'Very strong thirst' signifies that we feel an intense desire to please Sri Krishna with our *sevâ* - this is the main characteristic and this immense greed makes us supremely absorbed in Sri Krishna - this is the secondary characteristic of *râg-bhakti*.

When we are completely absorbed in something we lose touch with the external world, since then our only thought is how to make the ever-sportive Sri Krishna happy? How to serve Him according to our *bhâv*? In this state we are only concerned with His *sevâ* - nothing else enters the heart of a devotee. '*Swârasiki*' means the devotee has an intense greed to serve Sri Krishna and make Him happy by serving the same *ras* that he possesses. For example - if the devotee is in parental *ras* he treats Sri Krishna like a child and has an immense longing to make Him taste that *ras*. The devotee's desire to make Sri Krishna happy is so enormous that he is absolutely immersed in Him. This is *Râgâtmikâ bhakti* and it is present completely in the eternal associates of the Lord in Vraja dhâm - in fact it is present only in Vraja dhâm.

"The *bhakti* that is present openly in the Vrajavâsis is '*Râgâtmikâ bhakti*'; the devotional practice that follows in the footsteps of *Râgâtmikâ bhakti* is *Râgânugâ bhakti*." - (B.R.S.)

"*Râgâtmikâ bhakti* is present chiefly in the Vrajavâsis and *Râgânugâ bhakti* is that which follows in the footsteps of *Râgâtmikâ bhakti*."

– (C.C.Madhya.22.85)

Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd has stated the characteristics of *râg-bhakti* as follows –

"There are devotees who feel slight interest in *râg-bhakti*; however they have still not felt *râg-bhakti*. *Râg-bhakti* is like a radiant moon; a little trace of the moonlight of the moon-like *râg-bhakti* falls in these devotees and their heart dazzles like crystal. Then they hear from the scriptures about the wonderful *sevâ* that *Râgâtmikâ* devotees perform and then they are interested to achieve the same. Here we should note the point that the devotee's heart should be clean – it should not be polluted with lust, anger, jealousy and the like. If such a devotee hears from the sâdhus and the scriptures about the perfect *sevâ* rendered by the *Râgâtmikâ* devotees he feels interested. Now with this interest if he follows the footsteps of the *Râgâtmikâ* devotees we can say he is performing *Râgânugâ bhakti*.

In this context 'hear from the sâdhus and scriptures' means the devotee should hear about the loving *sevâ* performed by the Vrajavâsis and how Sri Krishna relishes the *ras* of their *sevâ*. When the devotee hears and glorifies these pastimes his enthusiasm knows no bounds; just as when a moon ray disperses through a prism it looks all the more beautiful, similarly the hearing and glorifying enters the clear heart of a devotee and becomes more joyful. Thus the devotee is enthused with interest in *prem-sevâ*. This induces him in the path of *Râgânugâ bhakti*. Here 'interest' means the devotee realizes that the devotee considers the *bhakti-shâstras* that reveal the *bhâv* of the eternal Vrajavâsi associates of Sri Krishna as the best for hearing and he wants to follow those instructions only. This happens when the devotee has past *sanskâr* in this field. From the very beginning the devotee is greedy for Sri Krishna-*sevâ* (please note: only that kind of *sevâ* which the Vrajavâsis do) and does not practice *bhakti* simply because the scriptures order us to do so.

"*Râgâtmikâ bhakti* is full of pure loving service. Some rare fortunate person is tempted by hearing about it and then he follows in the footsteps of the eternal Vrajavâsi associates. A *Râgânugâ* devotee does not practice *bhakti* just because of scriptural injunctions." – (C.C.Madhya. 22.87-88)

When we feel tempted – it is true – we do not care for scriptural injunctions, however if we want to gain that *sevâ* it becomes necessary to obey the rules prescribed by the *bhakti-shâstras*.

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has ordained –

"When we hear about the sweet *bhâv* of the Vrajavâsis we feel tempted; we do not care whether the scriptures tell us to practice *bhakti* or do not tell us. If we want to practice *bhakti* because the scriptures order us to do so we cannot say we were greedy for it." – (Râg-vartma Chandrikâ)

However if we want to achieve the topmost goal that is *Vraja-prem*, then we must necessarily practice *bhajan* according to the rules prescribed in the *Râgânugâ* scriptures. This is because –

"If someone performs exclusive Hari-*bhakti* by rejecting the *shrutis*, *smritis*, purâns and the Pancharâtra – we find that he only creates trouble." – (Brahma-Yâmal-Tantra)

Earlier we have mentioned something about 'interest'. Now the fact is that majority of the devotees do not have this interest in the preliminary stage. Yet, when they perform *bhajan* according to the rules of *bhakti* and they continue to hear about the *Râg-bhakti* of the Vrajavâsis they develop interest. Then they become *Râgânugâ* devotees. When we hear from the devotees who are always immersed in pure love then we quickly gain interest. We also strive to follow the devotees in the same mood as they possess. This means that if we feel greedy after hearing about the loving *sevâ* of the eternal associates in the *madhur bhâv* we too start practicing in *madhur bhâv*. *Râgânugâ bhajan* is the spiritual practice by which we can attain that same stage of love as those devotees whom we are following (the eternal Vrajavâsis in the *madhur bhâv*). We have to follow scriptural rules in this process, since the *Râgânugâ* scriptures aim to tell the *Râgânugâ* devotees about the behavior of the eternal associates and enthuse us with vigorous interest.

"siddhasya lakshanam yat syât sâdhanam sâdhakasya tat."

Meaning - "We have to practice to get all those qualities that they already possess."

If we see some devotee who has developed interest in *Râgânugâ bhakti*, yet his conduct is contrary to the *bhakti-shâstras*, then we should understand that he has not developed true interest or he is trying to gain something material pretending to be interested.

When we really gain interest then the scriptures will follow us. It means that in the early stage of interest we should perform *bhajan* according to the rules and regulations prescribed in the scriptures, and after we gain complete interest the rules follow us – this is the difference.

Srimad-Bhâgavatam (2.1.7) says –

*"e-aivâvihiteti keshâncit sangyâ,
ruchimâtra pravritttyâ vidhi-prayuktenâpravrittatvât.
na cha vaktavyam vidhyanadheenasya na sambhavati bhaktiriti."*

Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd has explained this verse as follows –

"*Râgânugâ bhakti* starts from the slightest hint of interest. No one steps on it because the scriptures order so. Therefore some people call it '*avihitâ*' (not according to the rules). However the ones who step in the path of *bhakti* not caring for the scriptural injunctions – we cannot say that they are not practicing *bhakti*, because we see in Srimad-Bhâgavatam the following statement –

'O king, very often sages who are beyond the rules prescribed in the scriptures are immersed in relishing Sri Hari-*kathâ*.'

Hence the *vidhi-marga* is weak since the devotees in this case practice *bhakti* because the scriptures order them to do so, while the devotees practicing *Râgânugâ bhakti* do so not caring for the scriptural order – hence it is much stronger – we should know this fact." – (B.S.310)

As soon as a devotee starts with *Râgânugâ bhakti* it makes him disinterested in anything other than *bhakti*. This is synonymous with greed. Srimad-Bhâgavatam states that when we bend towards Sri Hari-kathâ then it increases our interest gradually to such an extent that all topics other than Sri Krishna lose importance for us.

Now let us learn the various types of *Raag-bhakti*.

The Gradual Enhancement in Râg-bhakti

Although love for God is always great, it does depend on the devotee's identity and Sri Bhagavân's *swarup*. When the divine form expresses majesty and sweetness most completely then the love associated with Him is also most complete¹. Vrajendranandan Sri Krishna is *Swayam Bhagavân*. He is the only One Who manifests majesty and sweetness most completely and hence love too is most complete where He is concerned. Again love depends on how much sweetness a devotee can relish and the relation he has with Sri Krishna. In Vraja there are four types of *bhâv* –

- *Dâsya* (servitude),
- *Sakhya* (friendly)
- *Vâtsalya* (parental)
- *Madhur* (conjugal)

Amongst these *bhâv*, *sakhya bhâv* brings more pleasure than *dâsya bhâv*, *vâtsalya bhâv* is more enjoyable than *sakhya bhâv* and the relish is maximum in the *madhur bhâv*.

We can classify *Râgâtmikâ bhakti* into two –

1. *sambandha-rupâ*
2. *kâm-rupâ*

A Vrajavâsi² feels related with Sri Krishna and thinks – “I am Govinda's servant” or “I am Govinda's friend” or “I am Govinda's parent”. This is '*sambandha-rupâ*'. In this the devotee serves Sri Krishna according to his relation. In *kâm-rupâ* too the devotee has a relation with Sri Krishna; however in this *bhakti* eroticism is so dominant that it deserves special mention. This is present in the Vraja-beauties who are the source of *madhur ras*. Although they have a relation with Sri Krishna – that is – they consider Him to be their Beloved – however because their relation is extra-marital their love is not bound by any particular name. Their love is so strong that it crosses all barriers and establishes a loving relation with Sri Krishna. Thus their love is incomparable in all creation. Although it is referred to as '*kâm*' (lust) it is supremely dominant pure love or *prem*.

“The most dominant love of the fair sex of Vraja is referred to as '*kâm*'. The dear and wise associates of Sri Bhagavân such as Uddhav crave for this sort of '*kâm*'.” – (B.R.S.)

The *prem* of the *Gopikâs* is inexpressibly sweet and is called as '*kâm*'. It is entirely devoid of any desire for sense-gratification and although its

¹ Although love can be complete, some types of love are more complete than the others.

² 'Vrajavâsi' always refers to the eternal associates of Sri Krishna in Vraja dhâm.

external symptoms resemble 'kâm' its aim is nothing but to make Sri Krishna happy. It is indeed an inconceivable mystery!

Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd has written in Preeti Sandarbha –

"Vraja-Gopikâs are in the mood of a sweetheart. Therefore their activities resemble those of *kâm*; hence we call their mood as '*kâm*'. It is entirely different from the material lust (*smara*) caused by the Love-God. There are many differences between the two. Ordinarily 'lust' indicates desire, while '*prem*' means we are aware of what is favorable for the person whom we love and we do everything to that effect. Sri Krishna is the object of love and the *Gopis* do whatever is good for Him. Such feeling is *prem*. This is why although the external symptoms of both *kâm* and *prem* are almost similar they are extremely unlike one another. *Kâm* indicates selfishness whereas *prem* means we endeavor to do what is favorable for the one we love. Thus the pure dominant *prem* in the Vraja-Gopis is referred to as '*kâm*' only because of external activities and we call their *bhakti* as '*kâm-rupâ*'."

We have already mentioned how *madhur bhâv* is the most enjoyable of all the *bhâvs*. One of the reasons is that *dâsya bhâv* has *sevâ* such as fanning, offering of betel-leaves, massaging of feet etc. In *sakhya bhâv* too we notice the same activities, however when a *sakhâ* defeats Sri Krishna in the game he climbs on His shoulder. Sometimes the friends tease Him by tugging at His clothes and at other times they offer Him food that they have bitten into. All these activities are not possible for a devotee in the mood of servitude. Thus we see that *sakhya bhâv* is higher than *dâsya bhâv*. *Vâtsalya bhâv* contains the activities of *dâsya bhâv*, however the parents scold and beat Sri Krishna, instruct Him about what is right and wrong, extreme care regarding His food and health. Thus *vâtsalya bhâv* is higher than *sakhya* and *dâsya bhâv*. Again we find that the activities of *dâsya*, *sakhya* and *vâtsalya* are all present in *madhur bhâv*. Over and above it contains activities such as winking or gesturing with eyes, gazing with longing, embracing, kissing etc. Such sweet activities are not present in the other *bhâv*. The Vraja-beauties manifest these activities to the fullest degree. Therefore they are established on the highest pedestal in the empire of *prem*¹.

You may ask – the relish of a certain *bhâv* depends on the taste of the particular devotee – how can we judge the individual taste and declare *madhur bhâv* as the highest? After all, the judgment depends on the devotee, does it not?

We beg to answer – you are right; the devotee considers his *bhâv* to be the topmost. It is alright for one in parental mood (*vâtsalya bhâv*) to feel the parental mood to be the best. However if we analyze impartially then we can decide the degree of the taste. The one who has no *ras* cannot decide on topics regarding *ras*. Hence one who is a *rasik* (situated in his own *ras*), yet is impartial towards other *ras*, and is the right person to make the judgment so as to which *ras* is the most relishing. Such a person is Uddhav Mahâshay. He was a devotee of *dâsya ras* ingled with *sakhya ras*. Sri Krishna sent him to Vrindâvan to console the *Gopis*. When he arrived here he saw the remarkable exultation of *viraha* surging in the ocean of *prem* experienced by the *Gopis*. He realized the extreme greatness of *Gopi-prem* (*madhur bhâv*) and begged to become a blade of grass or

¹ Their *prem* is the highest.

at least a moss in Vrajadhâm so that a speck of dust from the lotus feet of the *Gopis* would bathe him. We see this in Srimad-Bhâgavatam. This proves the superiority of *madhur bhâv*.

Our next question would be – if *Gopi-prem* is indeed superior, then why does everybody not aspire for *madhur bhâv*?

The answer is – Although *madhur bhâv* is the topmost, a devotee may be interested in the other *bhâvs* such as *dâsya*, depending on his past *sanskâr* or may be in this life itself he has gained the *kripâ* of some great soul who is in that *bhâv*. Let us understand this better –

Agreed that sweet dishes are more popular, they are considered the best, yet one may like sour, salty, pungent or bitter and not like the other tastes so much. It differs from individual to individual. Similarly although *madhur bhâv* is the topmost a devotee may be interested in *dâsya*, *sakhya* etc. Of course all this is regarding the *sâdhak* only. The *Râgâtmikâ* devotees are situated naturally in their respective states. A *Râgâtmikâ* devotee is one who loves Sri Krishna infinite times more than he loves himself. The *Râgâtmikâ* devotees are bliss personified – just like Sri Krishna. They do not perform any *sâdhanâ*. As soon as they get Sri Krishna's *darshan* their past *rati* is exulted. Amongst all the *Râgâtmikâ* devotees the Vraja-beauties are the highest and they are full of *mahâbhâv*. Sri Râdhâ is the greatest amongst the Vraja-beauties since the *mahâbhâv* called *mâdan* is present only in Her. The *mâdan-mahâbhâv* (or *mâdan-âkhy¹a mahâbhâv*) is the zenith of *prem*.

We can classify *madhur bhâv* (conjugal mood) into two types –

- *Swakiyâ* (bound by marriage)
- *Parakiyâ* (extra-marital relation)

Swakiyâ beloveds comprise of the 16108 queens of Dwârakâ. They are lawfully wedded to Sri Krishna according to the Vedic rites. They are always alert to obey His command and steadfast in the scriptural injunctions regarding chastity.

On the other hand, the Vraja *devis* have rejected their dear ones and *Ârya-path* (the rules of the civilized society) – simply out of their extraordinary love for Sri Krishna. They serve Him in an extra-marital relation. The Vraja *devis* are not bound to Him through nay Vedic rites such as keeping the priest and fire-God as witnesses. They meet Him only because they love Him. Hence the relation they share with Sri Krishna is the result of inconceivable love. They have had to forsake their relatives and the path of good conduct to establish this relation – they had to immerse all rules of *dharma* and *adharma*. This is the pinnacle of *anurâg*. As a result their *prem* has reached the height that is *mahâbhâv*.

Only the Vraja *devis* are in true *parakiyâ-bhâv*. Of course they are the personifications of Sri Krishna's *swarup-shakti* (internal potency) and hence they are His eternal consorts.

"*Parakiyâ bhâv* is the height of *ras* and it exists nowhere other than in Vraja dhâm."

– (C.C. Âdi.4.47)

Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd says –

¹ *Âkhyâ* = called ; *mâdan-âkhyâ mahâbhav* = the *Mahâbhâv* called *mâdan*

"When Sri Krishna relishes the exulted erotic *ras* that is heightened due to *parakiyâ bhâv* – He proves that He is indeed The *Rasik-Shekhar*." – (U.N.)

The wonderful distinction between Sri Krishna and other divine forms is His *ras*-exultation. Sri Krishna's potency *Yogmâyâ* who is an expert in making the impossible possible shrouds the intellect of the Vraja *devîs* and makes them forget that they are His eternal beloveds. She does this so that Sri Krishna and the Vraja *devîs* unite in ecstatic *ras* only due to extreme *anurâg* and not because of any social bonding. In this she enables both Sri Krishna and the Vraja-beauties to relish the *ras* of *prem*.

(Sri Krishna is saying) – "*Yogmâyâ* will make the *Gopîs* feel I am their lover (not married to them). I will not know this and neither will the *Gopîs* and we will continue eternally to steal one another's hearts. We will forsake the path of righteous conduct and unite with each other. Some times we will meet and at other times we will not – it will depend on luck. I will relish all this essence of *ras*. Through this relish I will shower mercy on my devotees by describing the pure love of Vraja dhâm. When the devotees hear this account (of the pure love of the *Gopîs*) they will give up Vedic rules and worship me in *râg-mârga*."

– (C.C.Âdi.4.29-33)

We already know the Râgâtmikâ devotees are in different types of *bhâv*; however Sriman-Mahâprabhu wants us to be *anugata* of a certain type of Râgâtmikâ *bhâv* – and which one is that?

Kâm-rupâ bhakti

We have already learnt that *Râgâtmikâ bhakti* is of two types –

- *Sambandha-rupâ*
- *Kâm-rupâ*

We can further classify *kâm-rupâ bhakti* into -

- *Sambhog-echchâmayî*
- *Tad-bhâvech-châtmikâ*

"When the *yutheshwarîs* (group-leaders) such as Srimati Râdhârâni wish to please Sri Krishna with loving sports, it is called *sambhog-echchâmayî* (such *Gopîs* are called '*nâyikâs*'¹), while '*tad-bhâvech-châtmikâ*' refers to those *sakhîs* whose only desire is to unite Sri Krishna with the *nâyikâs* such as Srimati Râdhârâni or Chandrâvali." – (B.R.S.)

These *sakhî* considers her *yutheshwarî's* pleasure when she is in Sri Krishna's company as greater than her own happiness. Her pleasure lies in relishing the sweet joy arising out of their union. Therefore they never desire a physical relationship with Sri Krishna. When the *yutheshwarîs* unite with Sri Krishna these *sakhîs* derive so much joy that is many times greater than they would have gained from the physical association with Sri Krishna. This *bhâv* of the *sakhîs* is so wonderful that it astonishes even the *nâyak*² Sri Krishna and the *nâyikâ*, so much so, that they too desire this special *bhâv*. Since this *sakhî-bhâv* is higher than the *bhâv* of the *nâyikâ*, it is called the '*chief kâmânugâ bhakti*'.

¹ The heroine or central character of the love-sport.

² The hero of a love-sport.

"The nature of a *sakhi* is indeed remarkable; she has no wish to make love to Sri Krishna. She arranges the love-sport between Srimati Râdhârâni and Sri Krishna and gains innumerable times more pleasure out of it than her own association with Him. Srimati Râdhârâni is like a wish-fulfilling creeper of Sri Krishna-*prem*, while the *sakhis* are its leaves, flowers and buds. When the nectarine love of Sri Krishna nourishes the creeper (Srimati Râdhârâni) then the leaves and flowers feel more joyous than they would have felt had they been watered directly¹."

- (C.C.Madhyā.8.207-210)

"When Sri Krishna touches Srimati Râdhârâni then Her *sakhis* although they may be far from Her express shivering, perspiration, goose flesh etc. that are the signs of ecstatic pure love, and when Sri Krishna very joyously drinks the nectar of Srimati Râdhârâni's lips then the *sakhis* express intoxication - this is a most astonishing event !" - (Sri Govinda-Leelāmritam)

These *sakhis* are as beautiful and talented as any *yutheshwari*. They completely arrange the love-sports and fun and frolic. They are Vraja-beauties who are the caskets of erotic *ras*. Sri Krishna and His beloveds love them more than their lives. They extol Sri Krishna to His sweetheart and sing Her glory to Him. In this manner they arouse their passion for each other and arrange for Their *abhisâr* (secret meeting). They hand over the sweetheart to Sri Krishna, joke with them, console them, arrange their dresses, are experts at revealing the feelings of Sri Krishna and His sweetheart to the other, hide the *nâyikâ's* folly, instruct her so as to how she can cheat her husband and the elders, unite the *nâyak* and the *nâyikâ* at the right moment, offer the right *sevâ* at the right time, scold the *nâyak* and the *nâyikâ*, dispatch messages, restore the *nâyikâ's* life when she is in *viraha*, foil the plans of the opposite party - these are some of the *sevâs* of these *sakhis*.

These *sakhis* are of 5 types -

1. *sakhi*
2. *nityasakhi*
3. *prânsakhi*
4. *priyasakhi*
5. *param-preshtha-sakhi*

All these *sakhis* can be classified according to their nature as -

- *Vishama-snehâ*
- *Sama-snehâ*
- *Adhik-snehâ*

The *sakhis* who are *vishama-snehâ* love Sri Krishna little more than they love Srimati Râdhârâni - e.g. Dhanishthâ and Vindhyâ. The *sakhis* who sometimes exhibit little more love for Sri Krishna and little more love towards Srimati Râdhârâni at other times are *sama-snehâ*. E.g. *priya-sakhis* such as Kurangâkshi and *param-preshtha sakhis* such as Lalitâ and the Eight principle *sakhis* (popularly known as the *Ashth-sakhis*. *Prân-sakhis* and *nitya-sakhis* such as Kasturi and Manimanjari love Srimati Râdhârâni more and are called *Râdhâ-snehâdhikâ*.

Lalitâ, Vishâkhâ, Chitrâ, Indurekhâ, Champaklatâ, Rangadevi, Tungavidyâ and Sudevi are *param-preshtha sakhis*. Although they love Sri Krishna and Srimati Râdhârâni equally, they feel "we belong only to Râdhâ" - hence they reveal more love for Srimati Râdhârâni. It is a fact that they serve Sri Krishna only because

¹ If Sri Krishna would have directly made love to them.

He is Srimati Râdhârâni's Love and never as their own lover. Even though they make love to Sri Krishna – it is only to make Srimati Râdhârâni happy.

"Although the *sakhis* do not like to make love to Sri Krishna, Râdhikâ coaxes them to do so. She sends them to Sri Krishna under many pretexts since She derives much more pleasure from that than Her own association with Him. Srimati Râdhârâni and the *sakhis* express especially pure love and thus nourish the pleasure of *ras*. When Sri Krishna sees their love He feels satisfied."

– (C.C.Madhyā.18.212-214)

The *param-preshtha sakhis* love Srimati Râdhârâni very much and this love at last culminates in Sri Krishna-*prem*. And although they express less or more love for Sri Râdhâ-Krishna from time to time – it is their way of manifesting love naturally and they do not do so voluntarily. It is possible that we have more love for one person yet show equal love for both. Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd says –

"The *priya-narma sakhis* such as Lalitâ have immense love for Sri Râdhâ-Krishna, yet they express more love for Srimati Râdhârâni and at other times more love for Sri Krishna – this is the nature of the *sakhis*." – (U.N.)

The *visham-snehâ sakhis* such as Dhanishthâ love Sri Krishna more than Srimati Râdhârâni, but they do not have any *sakhi* following them. They are in a minority. There is no process of *bhajan* following their path.

Now the question arises which *sakhis* of Srimati Râdhârâni are the topmost? Naturally we would like to perform *bhajan* under their subjugation alone.

Manjari-bhâv

Sri Rupamanjari, Sri Ratimanjari, Sri Lavangamanjari etc are *adhik-snehâdhikâ* or *Râdhâ-snehâdhikâ*. They love Srimati Râdhârâni more. We call them '*manjaris*'. In all situations they relish immeasurable and inexpressible ever-new pleasure of *sevâ*. Although they do not expect any pleasure – all they desire is *sevâ* – yet it is the nature of *manjari-bhâv* and Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna's very confidential *sevâ* that they feel happy on their own. Their *bhâv* is so immense that even when they are close to Sri Krishna Who is Madan-Mohan; they retain their individual freedom and yet submerge Him in the ocean of joy simply by doing *sevâ*. Their *rati* is the only one of its kind; it reaches the height of wonder and becomes '*bhâvollâsa rati*'.

"When the *rati* of *sakhis* (for Srimati Râdhârâni) such as Lalitâ is equal or less than the passion for Sri Krishna, then we count their *rati* for Srimati Râdhârâni as the '*passing rati*', since that *rati* also nourishes their passion for Sri Krishna. However when the *rati* for Srimati Râdhârâni is more than the passion for Sri Krishna and keeps on increasing due to constant absorption in that *rati*, we call that passion as '*bhâvollâsa*'." – (B.R.S.)

This *bhâvollâsa rati* is the permanent *bhâv* of the *manjaris* such as Sri Rupamanjari. When we follow in the footsteps of this *bhâv* with determinant and do *sevâ* then our *bhâv* is called '*manjari-bhâv*'.

This *manjari-bhâv* alone is the compassionate 'hitherto unoffered' gift of Sriman-Mahâprabhu; Sri Rup and Sanâtan have practiced and preached this *bhâv* only.

Srila Narottam dâs Thâkur Mahâshay has written in his Prem-Bhakti-Chandrikâ –

“Do not follow the *sakhis* who are in the mood of *sama-snehâ* and *vishama-snehâ*; I shall discuss only the *adhik-sneha* *sakhis*. They remain constantly with Srimati Râdhârâni and indulge in charming talks about Sri Krishna – they are the *narma-sakhis*.

Sri Rupa-manjari is their leader while Sri Rati-manjari, Lavanga-manjari, Manjulâli, Sri Rasa-manjari and Kasturikâ are the chief *manjaris*. They serve with love, joy and enthusiasm.

I shall follow them and ask them to engage me in loving service. I shall understand what *sevâ* I should do by a mere hint from them. Bouncing with beauty and talents I shall follow them with deep love and stay amidst the *sakhis*. When the Divine Couple will sit surrounded by the *sakhis* I will serve them at the right time. When the *sakhi* gestures I will fan Them with the fly-whisk and offer betel-leaf at Their sweet lips. I will meditate constantly on the lotus feet of the divine Couple with deep love. Whatever I meditate upon during my *sâdhanâ* I shall get in my *siddha-deha* – this is the only process in the path of eternal love.”

– (P.B.C.)

A *Râgânugâ* devotee should take the shelter of eternal associates such as Sri Rupa-manjari and surrender unto them; in this manner we should worship in *manjari-bhâv* (given by our Spiritual Master). We should be more enthusiastic about serving Srimati Râdhârâni than serving Sri Krishna and think of ourselves as Srimati Râdhârâni’s very near and dear person. We may ask – ‘All the scriptures proclaim Sri Krishna-*prem* as the topmost achievable goal, then why should we love Srimati Râdhârâni instead of Sri Krishna?’ The reply is that – Sri Krishna is subjugated to Srimati Râdhârâni. When we love Her, we will attain Sri Krishna-*prem* much more and this will happen automatically. Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd has written –

“*vayam-idam-anubhuya shikshayâma, kuru chature ! saha râdhayaiva sakhyam, priya-sahachari ! yatra vâdhamantar-bhavati hari-pranaya-pramoda-lakshmih.*”

- (U.N.)

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained this verse as follows in his Ânanda-Chandrikâ purport –

Sri Manimanjari instructed a new *manjari* – “My dear clever girl, I am telling you from my own experience, it is better you make friends with Srimati Râdhâ. You may ask – why should I make a loving relation with Srimati Râdhâ? Rather is it not better to establish a loving relation with Sri Krishna? I’ll tell you why – please listen carefully. No doubt Sri Hari’s love is highly pleasurable; but if you love Srimati Râdhârâni deeply then that precious pleasure will present itself to you on its own. This is because love for Sri Krishna is included within your love for Srimati Râdhâ. Hence if you make friends with Her – it is needless to say that - a loving relation with Sri Krishna will form naturally.

When you become Srimati Râdhârâni’s firm *sakhi*, then Sri Krishna will consider you as His beloved’s dear friend and so He will love you all the more. Therefore He will not love you so much if you make friends with Him directly, however He will love you more if you love Her. So I am telling you if you can prove your love for Srimati Râdhârâni then Sri Krishna will love you even if you do not try for it.

Sri Krishna is even more joyous when we love Srimati Râdhârâni more than if we love Him exclusively. Also when Srimati Râdhârâni does *mân* or if the elders shut Her up in the house, then Sri Krishna will need you desperately to help Him meet Her. Then He will, on His own, run behind you to make friends with you. You see, you don't have to work hard to make friends with Him."

Especially if we wish to relish the sweet *ras* of Sri Krishna then worshiping the lotus feet of Srimati Râdhârâni becomes inevitable. Srila Raghunâth dâs Goswâmpâd has written –

"The one who has not worshiped the dust of Srimati Râdhârâni's lotus feet, has not taken shelter of Sri Vrindâvan that is decorated with Her footprints, has not conversant with the great devotees who are deeply immersed in Srimati Râdhârâni's servitude, how will such a person ever relish the most mysterious fathomless ocean of *ras* that is Sri Krishna?" – (Stavâvali)

This is the sole reason why Sripâd Raghunâth dâs Goswâmicaran has rejected the position of Srimati Râdhârâni's *sakhi* and has begged Her to exclusively make him Her maidservant –

"O devi Râdhike, Servitude of Your lotus feet is the highest position; leaving this I do not desire anything else (such as the position of Your *sakhi*). I pay obeisance to Your *sakhi*-hood eternally, however may I always remain rooted in the position of Your maidservant – this is my pledge."

- (V.K.)

Srimati Râdhârâni's servitude is not a main thing – it is the highest position or the most blessed status. Srimati Râdhârâni's maidservant is a servant in spite of being a *sakhi*. She has the right to the entire sweet *ras*. First she relishes sweet *ras* and then she performs *sevâ*. Therefore Srimati Râdhârâni's servitude is overflowing with *ras*.¹

Sometimes, by Srimati Râdhârâni's wish *sakhis* such as Lalitâ do unite with Sri Krishna, however on Sri Krishna's request – so much so – that even if their group leader orders them to do so – the *manjaris* never ever have the slightest wish to make love to Sri Krishna although it is extremely joyous. Sri Vrindâvan-Mahimâmrita says –

"The one who is exclusively immersed in relishing the *ras* of serving the lotus feet of Srimati Râdhârâni, she never accepts love-dalliance with Sri Krishna even in her dreams (definitely not when awake), when Sri Krishna forcibly tears her bodice and makes some advance towards her, then the *manjari* tearfully protests and laments – and beholding this scene - Srimati Râdhârâni, the Beloved of my life is laughing.'

Even *sakhis* such as Lalitâ do not get the pleasure of serving the Divine couple in a manner that the *manjaris* can serve. We get such fortunate *sevâ* when we are completely surrendered at Srimati Râdhârâni's lotus feet.

"I seek the refuge of Srimati Râdhârâni's maidservants headed by Sri Rupa-manjari – who can move care freely and unhesitatingly in the sports ground of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna's love-making² - that even the *prân-preshtha sakhis* such as Lalitâ cannot – and they constantly please Srimati Râdhârâni, Who is the

¹ To know more about this topic please read Sri Vilâp-Kusumânjali and Sri Râdhâ-Rasa-Sudhâ-Nidhi edited by me.

² When Srimati Râdhârâni and Sri Krishna are performing confidential pastimes.

controller of Sri Vrindâvan with their sweet *sevâ*, such as offering *tâmbul*, massaging feet, offering water and helping in *abhisâr*.” – (Vraja-Vilâs-Stav)

We, the Goudiya Vaishnavs, who wish to become Srimati Râdhârâni’s maidservants, pray from the bottom of our hearts –

“When will I get the association of my *sakhi* and sew flower-garlands for both of Them? O when will I stand in front of them fanning Them with the fly-whisk? And anoint Them with *aguru* and *chandan*? When, on the command of the *sakhi*, will I offer *tâmbul*? And adorn Their foreheads with *sindur* and *tilak*? When will I behold their charming and loving pastimes with my eyes? And gaze at Their moon like faces after seating Them on the throne? I wish to relish that sweetness with all my heart – when will Narottam dâs get such mercy?” – (Prârthanâ)

Let us learn how to achieve this superlative state by practicing bhajan in *manjari-swarup*.

How to perform Râgânugâ bhajan

The Vrajavâsis are the eternal associates of Sri Krishna and they have a very special *bhâv* for Him. When we hear about their *bhâv* and how they express it, if we feel greedy to achieve the same *bhâv*, then we are qualified for *Râgânugâ bhajan*. Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd says this in B.R.S. –

“*teshâm bhâvâptaye lubdho bhavedatrâdhikâravân.*”

He has also described in detail how such a qualified devotee should perform *Râgânugâ bhajan* –

“*krisham smaran janan-châsya preshtham nija-samihitam,
tat-tat-kathâratashchâsou kuryâd-vâsam vraje sada.
sevâ sâdhaka-rupena siddha-rupena châttrahi,
tad-bhâva-lipsunâ kâryâ vraja-lokânusâratah.*”

Meaning - “We should meditate on our Beloved Sri Krishna and His beloved, who is in the same mood as ourselves (*swajâtiya* devotee) and if possible, we should reside in Vrindâvan in our *sâdhak*-body also. If we are incapable of doing so then we should at least live here mentally and taking the shelter and surrendering unto the Vrajavâsi-devotee who is dear to Sri Krishna, and craving to get the same *bhâv* as that devotee, we should constantly perform *sevâ* in our *sâdhak-swarup* (externally) and in our *siddha-swarup* (mentally).” – (B.R.S.)

Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has explained the above two verses as follows –

“In these two verses Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd has explained the proper way to perform *Râgânugâ bhajan*. ‘*Preshtha*’ (in the above verse) refers to our Beloved Sri Nanda-Nandan in His budding youth. We should worship Sri Krishna in this form alone, but at the same time we should constantly remember His eternal associates who have similar desire as we and we should reside in Vraja dhâm in this manner. If possible we should physically live in some place in Vraja dhâm such as Vrindâvan etc. and in case we are incapable of doing so, it is our duty to live there at least in mind.

‘*Sâdhak*-form’ means the body that we are in at present and ‘*siddha-deha*’ indicates the body that is worthy of serving in the divine world, that on which we

should meditate upon. In this divine form (*siddha-deha*) we should serve under the command of Sri Râdhâ, Lalitâ, Vishâkhâ, Sri Rupa-manjari and other *sakhis* who are very dear to Sri Krishna and they wish to relish the sweet *bhâv* of Sri Krishna. In the *sâdhak*-body we should serve following the instructions of the Goswâmis such as Sri Rup and Sanâtan. This signifies that in *siddha-swarup* we should perform *sevâ* mentally under the guidance of Sri Râdhâ, Lalitâ, Vishâkhâ and Sri Rupa-manjari, while in *sâdhak* body we should do *sevâ* under the subjugation of the Vrajavâsis such as Sri Rup and Sanâtan. This is our duty.

Here '*anusâratah*' does not mean '*anukaran*' or imitation (we should not imitate the Goswâmis or the eternal divine associates), rather it indicates '*anusaran*' - which means - we should serve according to their command and following their *bhâv*."

True, in *Râgânugâ* path meditating on the divine pastimes is the main *sâdhanâ*, however in the primary stage we are not qualified for *leelâ-smaran*¹. Therefore we should concentrate more on hearing, chanting and following the other rules of *bhakti*. Then as our *chitta* gets more and more purified, we are drawn towards *leelâ-smaran*. Our *smaran* too becomes more intense. Ultimately when we reach the zenith of *bhajan*, *leelâ-smaran* naturally becomes the major part of *bhajan*. We should note that all the parts of *bhakti* mentioned in *vaidhi-bhakti* are useful in *Râgânugâ bhajan* also.

Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd mentions this in the verse -

*"shravanot-kirtanâdini vaidha-bhaktyuditâni tu,
yânyangâni cha tânyatra vigneयâni manishibhih."
- (B.R.S.)*

Here hearing and chanting also includes the stepping stone of *bhakti* such as accepting the shelter of Sri Gurudev's lotus feet as well. We should realize that all the rules of *bhakti* that we have already mentioned, and they are the parts of *vaidhi-bhakti* - we should stick to them in *Râgânugâ bhajan* also. If we do not obey the instructions of the Vrajavâsi Goswâmis such as Sri Rupa Goswâmi, Sanâtan Goswâmi etc., how can we say we are surrendered unto them? Then how can we follow in their footsteps? The serious devotees should practice only those rules that are in accordance with their *bhâv* and never do what is contrary to it - such as *aham-grahopâsanâ*, *mudrâ*, *nyâs*, meditating on Dwârakâ, worshipping Sri Rukmini etc. Although the *âgam-shâstras* mention these processes of *bhakti* a *Râgânugâ sâdhak* should not perform them. In the path of *bhakti* if we do not perform some little processes then it does not matter.

Râgânugâ practice has two limbs - external and internal. External practice is done with *sâdhak*-body while we perform internal *sâdhanâ* by meditating on our *siddha-deha*. In the *sâdhak*-body we should hear, chant, forsake material pleasures, and serve The Deities with actual objects. We should meditate on our *siddha-deha* and serve Sri Krishna Who is our Beloved with this body for only the *siddha-deha* is worthy of serving the divine Couple. We should seek refuge of Srimati Râdhârâni Who is the object of our love and surrender unto Her and Her dear ones. It is our duty to strive for that brilliant *ras* and following the instructions of Sri Rupa-manjari we should collect objects for *sevâ* in meditation and serve the divine couple as the time and situation demands.

"bâhya antar ihâr dui to sâdhan,

¹ Meditating on the divine pastimes

*bâhya – sâdhak-dehe kore shraban kirtan.
mone – nija siddha-deha koriyâ bhâbon,
râtridine kore braje krishner seban."*

Meaning - "*Rângânugâ bhajan* comprises of two practices – external and internal. Externally, we should hear and chant, while we should meditate on our *siddha-deha* and serve Sri Krishna in Vraja dhâm all day and night."

– (C.C. Madhya.22.89-90)

But to meditate on the *siddha-deha*, first we have to know what a *siddha-deha* is.

What is siddha-deha?

'*Siddha-deha*' means the body that our Spiritual Master gives us and we meditate on it. Srimat Jiva Goswâmpâd says – '*siddha deha*' is the body that is worthy of serving Sri Krishna. Srila Vishwanâth Chakravartipâd has said – '*siddha-deha*' is the body that is worthy of serving Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna in reality (*sâkshât sevâ*). By using the word '*sâkshât*' he is indicating that when a *sâdhak* meditates on the *siddha-deha*, then Sri Krishna accepts the *sevâ* in reality. In *Rângânugâ* when a *sâdhak* has not reached the stage of *rati* (passion), then he deliberately meditates that he is serving the Divine Couple with *siddha-deha*; however when a *sâdhak* attains the level of *rati*, he identifies naturally with his *siddha-deha*.

The *siddha-deha* that the *sâdhak* meditates on is not imaginary. It is the supreme truth, eternal, blissful and conscious. Some people think that although the soul is originally spiritual, it is infinitesimally small; hence the *sâdhak* has to meditate upon an imaginary body. He pleases *Sri Bhagavân* by his *sâdhanâ* and then following the rule – "*yâdrishi bhâvanâ yasya siddhirbhavati tâdrishi*"¹ – He converts the *sâdhak's* soul into His associate. So the message is that although later on the *siddha-deha* does exist (as *Sri Bhagavân's* associate), just now it is imaginary. This means, we are meditating on a make-believe image. This is not a Vaishnav-conclusion.

The *siddha-deha* of the *sâdhak* is the permanent beautiful treasure of the eternal divine abode. All the *siddha-dehas* are conscious, blissful and is in the mode of especially pure goodness. We see in Srimad-Bhâgavatam –

"vasanti yatra purushâh sarve vaikuntha-murtayah."

Meaning - "Innumerable bodies are present in the divine Vaikuntha. They are parts of *Sri Bhagavân's* effulgence and are the precious and beautiful treasure of the Holy Abode."

Sri Gurudev is *Sri Bhagavân's* intense compassion personified. He knows our *siddha-deha* by the power of his meditation. Then he reveals to us our *siddha-deha*. We should meditate on this divine body and think "I am this body". Such meditation is called "meditating on *siddha-deha*". So we should note that our *sâdhanâ* does not create the *siddha-deha*. When we accomplish success in *bhakti* and we become worthy of serving *Sri Bhagavân* in reality, we become blessed and get the opportunity to serve the Divine Couple in our *siddha-deha*. Hence it is imperative that we follow the *Siddha-pranâli* received in the *Guru-paramparâ* and

¹ On accomplishment of your *sâdhanâ*, you get the body and situation as per your meditation.

perform *sâdhanâ* accordingly. We should meditate on that *siddha-deha* which we receive in *Sri Guru-paramparâ* and that which *Sri Gurudev* has given us.

Lord Sadâshiv has instructed us in *Sri Sanatkumâr-Samhitâ* how to meditate on *siddha-swarup* –

*"parakiyâbhimâninyastathâsya cha priyajanâh,
prachirenaiva bhâvena ramayanti nijapriyâm.
âtmânam chintayettatra tâsâm madhye manoramâm,
rupa-youvana-sampannâm kishorim pramadâkritim.
âanâshlpakalâbhigyâm krishnabhogânurupinim,
arârthitâm-api krishnena tato bhogaparânmukhim.
âadhikânucharim nitya tatsevanaparâyanâm,
krishnâdapyadhikam prema râdhikâyâm prakurvitam.
prityanudivasam yatnâttayoh sangamakârinim,
tatsevanasukhâswâdabharenâti sunivritâm.
ityâtmânam vichintyaiva tatra sevâm samâcharet,
brâhmamuhurtamârabhya yâvat sântâ mahânishâ."*

Meaning - "The *Vrajasundaris* who are in *parakiyâ-bhâv*, give immense pleasure to their Beloved *Sri Krishna* according to their *bhâv*. Similarly, you too consider yourself as a *Gopa*-maiden and serve in subordination to their *bhâv*. You are a maidservant amongst the *Gopa*-damsels. How will you meditate on this self? You will think – "I am an extremely attractive maiden brimming with beauty, youth and sensuousness. I am a *Gopa*-girl and experienced in many arts regarding *Sri Krishna's sevâ*. I am *Srimati Râdhârâni's* eternal companion and follower." Your loving *sevâ* lies in uniting *Srimati Râdhârâni* with *Sri Krishna* and your happiness lies therein.

If *Sri Krishna* ever prays you for love-making, you will refuse, since you are *Sri Râdhâ's* maidservant and you feel joy in making her happy. In this manner you will serve *Srimati Râdhârâni* eternally and love Her more than *Sri Krishna*. You will serve Her during all eight parts of the day¹ and unite Her with *Sri Krishna*. Thus you will submerge in the joy of *sevâ*². You will serve right from the *Brâhma-muhurta* till the end of night."

Those of us who cannot see the *siddha-deha* clearly, or do *leelâ-smaran* conspicuously – rather they even find it laborious – it is better if they are not over-enthusiastic about meditating on *siddha-deha* and practicing *leelâ-smaran*. It is better if they hear from the holy lips of the great devotees about the divine pastime. Then they should read lots about the glory of *Gopi-bhâv*, repeat them and again the *lâlasâmayi*³ prayers that crave for such *bhâv* and try to perform very little *Gopi-bhâv* in the form of remembering and thinking. If they perform *bhajan* like this, then gradually they will be able to meditate nicely on their *siddha-deha* and they will be qualified to meditate on the pastimes of the Divine Couple. They will also be able to meditate on the loving *sevâ* of the Divine Couple in the correct manner.

Our *Sri Gurudev* gives us *siddha-deha* and along with it the *ekâdash-bhâv* (11 qualities of *siddha-deha*). Now let us learn about the *ekâdash bhâv* of the *siddha-deha*.

¹ The day is divided into eight parts called "*ashta-yâm*"

² This indicates that we should immerse ourselves in relishing the *ras* of serving *Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna* in *Sri Vrindâvan* constantly by meditating on our *siddha-deha*.

³ '*lâlasâ*' literally means 'salivating'; here it indicates "extremely intense longing".

Ekâdash- bhâv or the eleven qualities of siddha-deha

*"nâma-rupam vayo veshah sambandho yutha eva cha,
âgyâ sevâ parâkâshthâ pâlyadâsi nivâsakah"*

Meaning - "The *ekâdash-bhâv* comprises of –

1. name,
2. form,
3. age,
4. dress,
5. relation,
6. group,
7. command
8. *sevâ*,
9. *parâkâshthâ*¹
10. protected maid servant
11. residence."

Now let us define each one.

1. **Name** –

*sri-rupa-manjari-ityâdi nâm-âkhyânânurupatah,
chintaniyam yathâ-togyam swa-nâma vajasubhruvâm*

Meaning - "The devotees who desire the confidential *sevâ* of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna in the secluded flower-grove in the form of a Vraja-beauty, under the guidance of *Manjaris* such as *Sri Rupa-manjari*, should meditate on her *Manjari*-name."

2. **Form** –

*"rupam yutheshwari-rupam bhâvaniyam prayatnatah,
trailokya-mohanam kâmoddipanam gopikâpateh cha"*

Meaning - "The *sâdhak* should meditate on her *Manjari*-form which is as beautiful as any group-leader. Sri Krishna is so handsome that He hypnotizes the three worlds, however the *Manjari* is so voluptuous that she arouses passion even in Him."

3. **Age** –

*"vayo nânâvidham tatra yattu tridashavatsaram,
mâdhuryâdbhuta kaishoram vikhyâtam vajasubhruvâm"*

Meaning - "Although the age (in sweet mood in *Vrajadhâm*) can vary from child to *pouganda*, the *manjari* is mostly at the sweet age of thirteen."

4. **Dress** –

¹ The zenith (we shall learn more about this in the following explanation)

*vesho neela-patâdyaishcha vichitrâlankritaistathâ,
swasya dehânurupena swabhâvah rasa-sundarah."*

Meaning - "The *manjari* should dress beautifully in various colors such as blue, yellow etc. according to her look, nature and *rasa*. She should also decorate herself with different artistic ornaments."

5. **Relation** –

*sevyâ-sevaka sambandhah swa-manovritti-bhedatah,
prânâtyaye'pi sambandhm na kadâ parivartayet.*

Meaning - "Although one may have different relations with Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna depending on the tendency of the mind, a *manjari* mainly has the relation of *sevyâ* and *sevak* with Them. They will accept death, yet not forsake this relation¹."

6. **Group** –

*yathâ yutheshwari-yutha sada tishthati tad-vashe,
tathaiva sarvadâ tishthed bhutvâ tadvasha-vartini"*

Meaning - "A group always rallies around its group-leader; similarly the *sâdhak* should remain subordinate to the group-leader in the *manjari-swarup*."

7. **Command** –

*"yutheshwaryâ shirasy-âgyâm-âdâya hari-râdhayoh,
yathoditâm tachchhushrushâm kuryâdânandasamyutâm"*

Meaning - "*Sri Rupa-manjari* is the leader of the *manjaris* – we should place all her commands on our heads (obey submissively) and serve Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna joyously according to her orders."

8. **Sevâ** –

*châmara vyajanâdinâm samyoga pratipâlanam,
iti sevâ parisegyeyâ yathâmati vibhâgashah*

Meaning - "We should serve in the *manjari-swarup* according to our desire and instructions – such as fanning, offering perfume, water, *tâmbul* etc."

9. **parâkashthâ** –

*"shri-râdhâ-krishnayoryadvad rupamanjarikâdayah,
prâptâ nitya sakhitwancha tathâ syâmiti bhâvayet"*

Meaning - "We should have the firm faith that just as the earlier *manjaris* such as *Sri Rupa-manjari* are the eternal *sakhis* of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna, by following in their footsteps I too shall attain the topmost *bhâv* (zenith). In this manner we should meditate on our *manjari-swarup*."

¹ This line of the verse may also mean – "even after dying they will not forsake this relation."

10. Protected maidservant –

*"pâlya-dâsi cha sâ proktâ paripâlyâ priyamvadâ,
swamanovrittirupena yâ nityâ paricharikâ"*

Meaning - "The *manjari* is so close to Srimati Râdhârâni that she reflects all Her emotions; in spite of this, she lives under the care and protection of her *Ishwari*. Also, she has multi-faceted talents and still she is *Swamini's* maidservant. This is her greatness."

11. Residence –

*"nivâso vrajamadhye tu râdhâkrishna-shtale matah,
vamshi-vatashcha sri nandishwarashchâpyati koutukah."*

Meaning - "The *manjari* lives happily in Sri *Vrajadhâm* – at places where the Divine Couple perform Their pastimes – such as *Vamshi-vat¹*, *Nandishwar²* etc."

When we desire *sevâ* in subjugation to the *Gopi-bhâv*, pure heart softens and melts. When we are hungry we naturally find the food tasty; similarly the desire for *sevâ* makes us relish the sweetness of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna's *leelâ-smaran*. Those who wish to get *sevâ* following in the footsteps of *Gopi-bhâv*; only they can enjoy the sweetness of the divine pastimes. When the *bhâv* of a devotee is expressed in its entirety, we call it "*Gopi-bhâv*". We can relish Sri Krishna's sweetness to the greatest degree in this *Gopi-bhâv* alone.

What is the chief characteristic of *Gopi-bhâv*? When we are absolutely devoid of any desire for happiness for ourselves and endeavor only to make Sri Krishna happy – this is the chief characteristic of *Gopi-bhâv*. The *manjaris* display this characteristic to the greatest extent. The *manjaris* are ever absorbed in praying for *sevâ*. '*Bhâv*' is a mental state. Ordinarily '*bhâv*' refers to the equalization of the mind with the object of meditation. When we immerse ourselves exclusively in the pleasure of serving Srimati Râdhârâni and are completely absorbed in it, it is called '*manjari-bhâv*.' We, as *sâdhaks*, should worship in this *manjari-bhâv*.

Manjari-bhâv-sâdhanâ has two forms of worship

Sri Krishna's pastimes are of two types –

- manifested
- unmanifested

When material people can see the divine pastimes with material eyes, we call such *leelâs* as '*prakat leelâ*' or manifested pastimes. On the other hand, when the people of this world cannot see the divine pastimes, we call such pastimes as '*aprakat leelâ*' or 'unmanifested pastimes.' Both the *leelâs* are identical. The difference lies in who is able to see it and who is not. The unmanifested pastimes do not mix with worldly people and mundane objects, while the *prakat leelâ* is mixed up with the material world. Although the *prakat leelâ* is not subject to change – just like Sri Krishna's form that is always divine – it appears to have a

¹ The banyan tree on which Sri Krishna played His flute.

² Nandagrâm

beginning and an end. However these *leelâs* are not controlled by time and place – we should realize this. These pastimes too occur by His wish alone and His *swarup shakti* controls them.

"We can worship Sri Krishna's unmanifested pastimes in two ways – *swârasiki* and *mantramayee*" – (Sri Krishna-Sandarbha.153)

Mantramayee worship

Sri Krishna is present in *Yogpeeth* in different places. He is surrounded by His associates who are seated in various positions. When we meditate on them as such and worship them with *mantras* mentioned in the scriptures, we call it *mantramayee* worship. In Vrajadhâm there are different places where the *Yogpeeth leelâ* takes place. In this worship Sri Krishna is present with His associates in one particular place and the entire worship takes place in this place only– therefore *mantramayee* worship resembles a lake with still water.

Swârasiki worship

Swârasiki leelâs are those pastimes of Sri Krishna that are according to our mood (in the case of a *Manjari* it is the sweet mood or conjugal mood). They do not occur at the same place and at the same time. They are without a beginning, middle and end. They are extremely variegated. Each pastime is unique. Different pastimes occur in different places and at different times. These *leelâs* resemble a flowing river.

"These *leelâs* take place as and when He wishes and differs from situation to situation." – (Sri Krishna-Sandarbha, 153)

Just as a river may have lakes in between, the *swârasiki leelâ* (that is like a river) have the *Yogpeeth leelâ* (that resembles a lake) within it. When we meditate on these variegated pastimes throughout the day, we call it *swârasiki* worship.

How to perform mantramayee worship

Boudhâyan Smriti states the meditation in *mantramayee* worship as follows –

"govindam manasâ dhyâyed gavâm madhye
sthitam shubham,
barhâ peeda-samyuktam venuvâdanatatparam,
gopijanaih parivritam vanya-pushpâvatamsakam."

Meaning - "Meditate on Sri Govinda in your mind – he is present in all, He is adorning a crown of peacock-feathers, ready to play on His flute, surrounded by the *Gopis* and His ear-rings are made of wild flowers."

Sri Gopâl-Tâpani Shruti too mentions *mantramayee* worship as follows –

"Tada hovâcha – hairanyo gopaveshamabhrâbham tarunam kalpadrumâshritam.
Tadiha shlokâ bhavanti –

'satpundarikanayanam meghâbham vaidyutâmbaram,
dwibhujam mounamudrâdhyam vanamâlinamishwam.
gopa-gopi-gavâvritam sura-druma-talâshritam,
divyâlankâranopetam ratnamandapamadhyagam.
kâlindi-jala-kallola-sangimâruta-sevitam,
chintayech-chetasâ krishnam mukto bhavati samsriteh.'
'govindam sach-chidânanda-vigraham.' Iti.

Meaning - Lord Brahmâ said –“Sri Krishna is dressed as a cowherd boy, He is cloud-complexioned, adolescent and His eyes are shaped like lotus petal. He is clad in yellow dhoti, has two hands and is silent. He is wearing a garland of wild flowers and He is the Controller. Brilliant ornaments adorn Him and the *Gopas*, *Gopis* and the cows surround Him. He is seated on a gem-studded throne beneath a wish-fulfilling tree. The breeze blowing across the Kalindi River and laden with water droplets is serving Him. If we serve such Sri Krishna in meditation, we will be verily liberated from the material ocean. We should worship Him with words such as ‘Govinda’, ‘sach-chidânanda’ etc.”

Types of *mantramayee* worship

Mantramayee worship is of two types –

- *Yogpeeth* worship
- *Archâ-vigraha*¹ worship

We should perform *Yogpeeth*-worship in meditation according to the descriptions given in Sri Govinda-Leelâmrita, Sri Krishna-Bhâvanâmrita etc. Also Sri

Govinda is himself present on every altar in a silent form to accept the loving service from His devotees. When we serve Him with utmost love, He gives up His silence and instructs the devotee in a dream so as to how he should serve Him. Sometimes He also actually speaks to the devotee (when he is awake). However this is extremely confidential and our preceptors have forbidden us to discuss this in detail – hence such devotees have not recorded it in writing. Sri Hari-Bhakti-Vilâs is the topmost Smṛiti² have stated the guidelines regarding this form of worship.

How to perform *swârasiki* worship

Sri Krishna’s *Leelâ-shakti* wants Him to enjoy various *leelâs*; therefore she manifests the right *leelâs* at his right time. The *swârasiki leelâ* enfolds the *mantramayee leelâ* in her arms³ and is flowing in all its colorful variegatedness since eternity.

During the *prakat-leelâ* (the pastimes that material people can see with mundane eyes) when Sri Krishna leaves Vrindâvan and goes to Mathurâ, then the associates of Vraja are scorched with *viraha*. However even then, the *swârasiki leelâ* continues in a shrouded manner and it contains the *Yogpeeth leelâ*. But, although the associates do realize this, they do not accept this as real. Due to extreme *viraha*, they feel it is but a *sphurti*. Srila Rupa Goswâmpâd has said –

“Sri Krishna is always sporting with the *Vrajadevis* in Vrindâvan and performing loving pastimes such as the *Râs-leelâ* – they are never separated from Him.”

– (U.N.)

Srîmat Jiva Goswâmpâd has explained this statement as follows – “These words certainly refer to the *aprakat leelâ* (the pastimes that cannot be seen with mundane eyes). ‘Vrindâvan’ indicates the ‘unmanifested Vrindâvan’.”

¹ The Deity that we worship on the altar in our home

² Smritis mean “that which has to be remembered”. Unlike the Vedas which are considered of divine origin, the Smritis are of human compositions which guide individuals in their daily conduct according to time and place. They list the codes and rules governing the actions of the individual, the community, society, and the nation. They are also called Dharma Shâstras or laws of righteous conduct.

³ It means that the *mantramayee* or *Yogpeeth leelâ* is a part of *swârasiki leelâ*.

This means that Sri Krishna is always sporting with the Vrajavâsis. There is no question of separation.

Padma Purân too states –

“*go-gopa-gopikâ sange **kridati** kamsahâ*”

Meaning - "The enemy of Kamsa (Sri Krishna) sports with the cows, *Gopas* and *Gopis*."

'*Kridati*' indicates the simple present tense. This means that Sri Krishna is always engaged in divine play in Vrindâvan. Sri Brahmâ glorified Lord Govinda in Brahma-Samhitâ as follows –

"Vrindâvan is an abode of gem-studded palaces and is decorated with innumerable wish-fulfilling trees. There He is taking care of countless Surabhi-cows. Hundreds of thousands of *Gopa* beauties surround Him and serve Him most lovingly. I adore That Primeval Being – Sri Govinda."

This verse proves *swârasiki leelâ*.

How the Goudiya
Vaishnavs should
relish the eternal
pastimes

Sri Sri Nabadweep is non-different from Vrajâdhâm and Sri Goursundar is the united form of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Krishna. Therefore the Goudiya Vaishnavs should relish the sweetness of both these Holy places and relish the eternal pastimes in the form of loving devotees. As *sâdhaks* we should at first perform *Yogpeeth*-meditation (*mantramayee* worship) in Sridhâm Nabadweep

and worship Sri Goursundar along with His associates in the mind. When Sriman-Mahâprabhu is engrossed in *Vraja-bhâv* along with His confidantes, we too should enter the *Yogpeeth sevâ* in *Manjari-swarup* and perform mental worship of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Mâdhâv surrounded by the *sakhis* (*mantramayee* worship). This continues into meditating on the various pastimes throughout the day (*ashta-yâm*) and we call this the '*swârasiki*-worship'.

"Whatever we meditate upon during *sâdhanâ*, we shall get in *siddha-swarup*".

– (P.B.C.)

Following this rule the *sâdhak* is blessed by serving in both the *leelâs* in the eternal abodes in *siddha-swarup*.

"Here I shall get Sri Gourachandra and there Râdhâ-Krishna"

–(Srila Narottam dâs Thâkur Mahâshay)

This is the most confidential truth of *Râgânugâ*-practice by those Goudiya Vaishnavs who are humbly surrendered unto Sriman-Mahâprabhu and the preceptors appointed by Him such as Sri Rupa and Sanâtan. In fact this is the path of bhajan revealed by Sriman-Mahâprabhu, and preached and practiced by His confidential associates.