

Raganuga-bhakti and ISKCON: An Examination

by Suhotra Swami (1994)

Lately a bit of controversy has arisen within our movement about raganuga-bhakti. Some Godbrothers of mine have reported that there are ISKCON devotees in Vrndavana who say that because raganuga-bhakti is not being cultivated within ISKCON, we should consult Gaudiya Vaisnava authorities outside of ISKCON to help foster our understanding and practice of it. Otherwise, if we all simply remain in vaidhi-bhakti (the platform they say that ISKCON is presently on), we will never attain the goal that Srila Prabhupada wanted us to attain--pure love of Godhead (krsna-prema).

In my view, such ideas are just misconceptions. Once raganuga-bhakti is properly understood, it will be clear that the more serious and sincere devotees of ISKCON are actually already cultivating it in the course of their regular services within Srila Prabhupada's sankirtana mission. Unfortunately, at the same time many devotees are philosophically confused about what raganuga-bhakti is. They think it is a highly esoteric and difficult subject and would rather leave it alone. Thus they do not know how to answer the charge that raganuga-bhakti is not being cultivated in ISKCON.

Part of the problem of understanding exactly what raganuga-bhakti is, is that there are different categories of explanations of this subject in Srila Prabhupada's books. Some devotees find it difficult to put these different explanations together in a coherent form. Below I've given a list of four of the different categories of Srila Prabhupada's explanations of raganuga-bhakti. With examples and explanations I hope to help the reader better understand what I mean by these categories.

1. Introductory explanation
2. Substantive explanation
3. Progressive explanation
4. Practical explanation

The introductory type of explanation is quite straightforward. What follows is what most devotees understand to be vaidhi- and raganuga-bhakti, from Nectar of Devotion, Chapter Two (The First Stages of Devotion).

"Now this sadhana-bhakti, or practice of devotional service, may also be divided into two parts. The first part is called service according to regulative principles: one has to follow these different regulative principles by the order of the spiritual master or on the strength of authoritative scriptures, and there can be no question of refusal. That is called vaidhi, or regulated. One has to do it without argument. Another part of sadhana-bhakti is called raganuga. Raganuga refers to the point at which, by following the regulative principles, one becomes a little more attached to Krsna and executes devotional service out of natural love. For example, a person engaged in devotional service may be ordered to rise early in the morning and offer arati, which is a form of Deity worship. In the beginning, by the order of

his spiritual master, one rises early in the morning and offers arati, but then he develops real attachment. When he gets this attachment, he automatically tries to decorate the Deity and prepare different kinds of dresses and thinks of different plans to execute his devotional service nicely. Although it is within the category of practice, this offering of loving service is spontaneous. So the practice of devotional service, sadhana-bhakti, can be divided into two parts--namely, regulative and spontaneous."

Now I'll give some examples of substantive explanations of raga-bhakti. By "substantive", I am thinking of the third definition given for this word in the dictionary, which is "essential." This example is from
Cc Adi-lila 4.15-16:

prema-rasa-niryasa karite asvadana raga-marga bhakti loka karite pracarana

rasika-sekhara krsna parama-karuna ei dui hetu haite icchara udgama

TRANSLATION

"The Lord's desire to appear was born from two reasons: He wanted to taste the sweet essence of the mellows of love of God, and He wanted to propagate devotional service in the world on the platform of spontaneous attraction. Thus He is known as supremely jubilant and as the most merciful of all."

Here the Lord's desire to propagate raga-marga (devotional service on the platform of spontaneous attraction) is explained as an essential or substantive reason for Lord Caitanya's appearance. Thus raga-marga is essential to Lord Caitanya's movement. If it is true that raga-marga is not being practiced in ISKCON, then how can ISKCON play a part in Lord Caitanya's mission?

A further substantive explanation of raga-marga is found in the same chapter of the Adi-lila, texts 32-35.

TEXT 32

ei saba rasa-niryasa kariba as vada ei dvare kariba saba bhaktere prasada

TRANSLATION

"I shall taste the essence of all these rasas, and in this way I shall favor all the devotees.

TEXT 33

vrajera nirmala raga suni' bhakta-gana raga-marge bhaje yena chadi' dharma-karma

TRANSLATION

"Then, by hearing about the pure love of the residents of Vraja, devotees will worship Me on the path of spontaneous love, abandoning all rituals of religiosity and fruitive activity."

TEXT 34

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

TRANSLATION

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

TEXT 35

'bhavet' kriya vidhilin, sei iha kaya kartavya avasya ei, anyatha pratya vaya

TRANSLATION

"Here the use of the verb "bhavet," which is in the imperative mood, tells us that this certainly must be done. Noncompliance would be abandonment of duty."

We learn from this that the mellows of prema-rasa that Lord Caitanya relished are meant to be tasted by His devotees through the hearing process. The path of worship and service in the spontaneous devotional mood that is engendered by such hearing is called raga-marga. If one does not perform this raga-bhakti, he abandons his duty to Lord Caitanya.

Next, let us examine some progressive explanations of raganuga-bhakti. By "progressive", I am taking the third meaning of this word given in the dictionary, which is "passing from one step to the next." Here is such a progressive explanation from the Nectar of Devotion, Chapter Sixteen (Spontaneous Devotion).

"Persons desiring to follow in the footsteps of such eternal devotees of the Lord as the Vrsnis and Vrndavana denizens are called raganuga devotees, which means that they are trying to attain to the perfection of those devotees. These raganuga devotees do not follow the regulative principles of devotional service very strictly, but by spontaneous nature they become attracted to some of the eternal devotees such as Nanda or Yasoda, and they try to follow in their footsteps spontaneously. There is a gradual development of the ambition to become like a particular devotee, and this activity is called raganuga. We must always remember, however, that such eagerness to follow in the footsteps of the denizens of Vraja (Vrndavana) is not possible unless one is freed from material contamination. In following the regulative principles of devotional service, there is a stage called anartha-nivrtti, which means the disappearance of all material contamination."

Raganuga-bhaktas follow in the footsteps of the eternal residents of Vrndavana, who are ragatmika devotees (i.e. they have spontaneous loving attraction for Krsna). In the above quote are two references to stages of progress on the raganuga path. The first reference is: "There is a gradual development of the ambition to become like a particular devotee, and this activity is called raganuga." The stages of the gradual development of raganuga-bhakti referred to here are given in the Nectar of Instruction, Verse 8, Purport. When a devotee becomes especially eager to hear about the pastimes of Krsna with a particular Vrajavasi, that stage is called sravana-dasa. When the devotee accepts these pastimes in his heart, that stage is called varana-dasa. We may note that varana-dasa entails the acceptance of a mantra that conveys a particular pastime of Krsna in essence; the mantra will be composed of names of Krsna that are associated with specific pastimes (i.e. Govinda, Gopijanavallabha, Gopala). Smarana-vastha is the stage of always remembering these

pastimes. Sampatti-dasa is the stage of actually entering these pastimes with one's own spiritual body. The second reference to stages of advancement pertaining to raganuga-bhakti is: "In following the regulative principles of devotional service, there is a stage called anartha-nivrtti, which means the disappearance of all material contamination." This indicates the ninefold levels of development from sraddha to prema given in the Purport to Bg 4.10 (cited from Brs 1.4.15-16). Accordingly, unless the devotee surpasses anartha-nivrtti, he cannot practice raganuga-bhakti. From the introductory explanation of raganuga-bhakti quoted previously from NOD Chapter 2, we see that raganuga-bhakti actually begins at the stage of real attachment (asakti). Thus vaidhi-bhakti extends from sraddha to ruci, raganuga-bhakti is performed on the asakti stage, bhava-bhakti is performed on the bhava stage and prema-bhakti on the prema stage. The very beginning of NOD Chapter 2 therefore informs us that there are three categories of bhakti--sadhana, bhava and prema--and that of the six characteristics of pure devotional service listed in Chapter 1, the first two characterize sadhana, the first four characterize bhava and all six characterize prema.

Finally, here are two examples of a practical explanation of vaidhi-and raganuga-bhakti. "Worship according to the pancaratrika-vidhi is called vidhi-marga, and worship according to the bhagavata-vidhi principles is called raga-marga." (SB 4.24.45-46, Purport) "This arca, arca, this is pancaratriki-vidhi. According to pancaratrika system, Narada-pancaratra, this worship of the Deity is there. And bhagavata-marga, the path of Srimad-Bhagavatam, is simply sravanam kirtanam. Out of the nine processes recommended, sravanam kirtanam visnoh smaranam pada-sevanam, so up to sravanam kirtanam smaranam, that is Bhagavata-marga. That is the best. And pada-sevanam arcanam vandanam dasyam, that is pancaratriki-vidhi. So both the vidhis, both the systems have been introduced. One will help the other. That is the way. Simply Bhagavata-marga... Just like in the Srimad-Bhagavatam, in the beginning, is simply sravanam--param satyam dhimahi; janmady asya-- smaranam, simply remembering, memorizing the Supreme Truth. But, of course, the pancaratrika-vidhi is recommended in the Second Canto. That, another pancaratrika-vidhi, is worshiping the gigantic form of the Lord. These things are there. But both, combined together, it is very much helpful. Bhagavata-marga. Bhagavata-marga will help the pancaratrika-marga, or process, and the pancaratrika process will help Bhagavata process. Both together is helpful. Therefore my Guru Maharaja introduced... You have seen the, what is called? That signia? One side, pancaratriki-vidhi, one side bhagavata-vidhi. That is... I have seen that Gaudiya Math emblem. Yes. And, so actually, Bhagavata-marga is very strong. That is sufficient. But without pancaratrika-vidhi this polluted body, polluted mind of the devotee, cannot be purified. Therefore both the process should be adopted in preaching Krsna consciousness movement." (From a 1971 Srimad-Bhagavatam lecture)

Thus we conclude our look at a few examples of introductory, substantive, progressive and practical explanations of raganuga-bhakti given by Srila Prabhupada. After reading them through, you may find yourself confused as to how all these explanations fit together. But they do fit together, and once you understand how they fit together, you will also understand that raganuga-bhakti is the standard method of devotional service given by Srila Prabhupada. It performed by ISKCON devotees who are Srila Prabhupadanugas (followers of Srila Prabhupada).

By means of the following question and answer session, we shall now proceed to a fuller understanding of vaidhi- and raganuga-bhakti in terms of Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON movement.

Q. *Various kinds of bhakti-yoga have been mentioned, such as sadhana-bhakti, vaidhi-bhakti, raganuga-bhakti, ragatmika-bhakti, bhava-bhakti and prema-bhakti. Can you give us*

a simple system by which we can understand what these are and how they are related to one another?

A. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura composed a work entitled Sri Tattva-sutra as a concise and systematic presentation of the complete science of bhakti-yoga. You have asked for a simple system by which the different kinds of bhakti-yoga can be understood, but first we should understand from Sri Tattva-sutra that bhakti is one: bhaktih purnanuraktih pare--"The spiritual function of bhakti is characterized as the fullest attachment to the Supreme Lord." (STs 31). Thus bhakti in its perfectional form is raga (attraction to Krsna), and it is spontaneously manifest in the residents of Goloka Vrndavana, who are therefore called ragatmika-bhaktas or svarupasiddhi-bhaktas.

Why are different kinds of bhakti described in the scriptures? Sri Tattva-sutra 32 explains: tasyah svarupam phalamupayasceti--"Since the living entities are either liberated or conditioned, bhakti is described as being phala (the goal) or upaya (the means)."

Liberated souls are of two kinds, 1) jivan-muktas (those who still possess material bodies) and 2) videha-muktas (those who have cast off their bodies and gone Back Home, Back to Godhead). Thus the phala or goal that liberated souls attain is also of two kinds, 1) bhava-bhakti (devotional service in ecstasy, performed by the jivan-muktas) and 2) prema-bhakti (devotional service in love of Godhead, performed by the videha-muktas). The baddha-jivas or conditioned souls must accept bhakti as their upaya (means to the goal). Sadhana-bhakti-yoga is that means to the goal, and it is divided into vaidhi and raganuga. Bhaktivinoda Thakura states that whether it is called upaya or phala, bhakti is always one. But bhakti is explained differently in the scriptures according to the condition of the performer. This is for the sake of the souls still caught in illusion, who otherwise could not understand what bhakti is nor how to attain it.

Since we in ISKCON are primarily concerned with bhakti as the means to the goal, we should carefully understand sadhana-bhakti's two parts, vaidhi and raganuga. Sri Tattva-sutra 34 states: upayabhakteh paranusilanam pratyaharascangam--"Upaya-bhakti has two limbs, which are 1) paranusilana or the positive cultivation of pure devotion to the Lord, and 2) pratyahara or the withdrawal of the senses from material activities." Paranusilana consists of just those devotional activities that help the sadhaka taste transcendental ecstatic emotions. What are those paranusilana devotional activities? Sri Tattva-sutra 35 explains: sravana kirtanadini paranusilano payogitvat tat pratyangani--"Hearing and chanting are the paranusilana activities that help cultivate feelings of love of God." Paranusilana is therefore the bhagavata-vidhi, which is the raganuga aspect of sadhana-bhakti. Pratyahara refers to the rules and regulations, or the vaidhi (pancaratrika) aspect. Pratyahara liberates the devotee from the material desires that pervert his original love for Krsna, and paranusilana helps the devotee to taste that love again. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura thus describes sadhana-bhakti as having an inner and outer aspect. Raganuga is the soft sweet inner fruit of sadhana-bhakti, and vaidhi is the protective outer skin of sadhana-bhakti.

Q. *You said that "raganuga-bhakti is the standard method of devotional service given by Srila Prabhupada. It is performed by ISKCON devotees who are Srila Prabhupadanugas (followers of Srila Prabhupada)." How is this statement to be understood?*

A. We have seen verses from Cc Adi-lila Chapter 4 that reveal Lord Caitanya's confidential desire to propagate raga-bhakti throughout the world. His confidential desire

was not to merely liberate the fallen souls by giving them a process of pratyahara, but to revive their dormant love for Godhead. Raga-marga or bhagavata-vidhi is thus the mission of ISKCON as defined by Lord Caitanya's confidential representative, Srila Prabhupada.

But yet vaidhi-bhakti is practiced and preached in ISKCON. What does that have to do with Lord Caitanya's confidential mission? ISKCON does not practice and preach vaidhi-bhakti or pancaratrika-vidhi for ordinary goals. What are the "ordinary goals" of pancaratrika-vidhi? Ordinarily, pancaratrika-vidhi (temple worship) is used as a means to attain material benedictions and five kinds of liberation. Thus, ordinarily, pancaratrika-vidhi is karma-jnana-misra-bhakti. But in ISKCON, we follow the path of pure devotion taught from Srimad-Bhagavatam by the Six Gosvamis. Srila Jiva Gosvami, in Bhakti-sandarbha, states that madhyama-adhikari devotees accept vaidhi-bhakti as bhakti-matra-kama, or vaidhi-bhakti motivated by a desire to attain pure bhakti. The "karma" of bhakti-matra-karma consists of the prescribed duties of Deity worship, and the "jnana" is the study of the scriptures. Both are aimed at attaining a pure taste for hearing and chanting about Krsna, which is raga-bhakti. This is also the method of vaidhi-bhakti recommended in Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.29.15-19 by Lord Kapiladeva--

"A devotee must execute his prescribed duties, which are glorious, without material profit. Without excessive violence, one should regularly perform one's devotional activities. The devotee should regularly see My statues in the temple, touch My lotus feet and offer worshipable paraphernalia and prayer. He should see in the spirit of renunciation, from the mode of goodness, and see every living entity as spiritual. The pure devotee should execute devotional service by giving the greatest respect to the spiritual master and the acaryas. He should be compassionate to the poor and make friendship with persons who are his equals, but all his activities should be executed under regulation and with control of the senses. A devotee should always try to hear about spiritual matters and should always utilize his time in chanting the holy name of the Lord. His behavior should always be straightforward and simple, and although he is not envious but friendly to everyone, he should avoid the company of persons who are not spiritually advanced. When one is fully qualified with all these transcendental attributes and his consciousness is thus completely purified, HE IS IMMEDIATELY ATTRACTED SIMPLY BY HEARING MY NAME OR HEARING MY TRANSCENDENTAL QUALITY."

Because the vaidhi-bhakti prescribed by Srimad-Bhagavatam is bhakti-matra-kama, it is considered by Srila Jiva Gosvami to be simply an aspect of raganuga-bhakti. Thus it is not incorrect to say that in ISKCON the method of devotional service is raganuga-bhakti ALONE. In Bhakti-sandarbha Anucchedya 311, Jiva Gosvami explains: ajatadrsa rucina tu sadrsesadara matradrta raganugapi vaidhi sambalitai-vanustheya; tatha loka-samgrahartham pratisthena jatadrsa rucina ca atra misratve ca yatha योगyam raganugayaiki krtyaiva vaidhi kartavya--"Devotees who have an interest to practice raganuga-bhakti, but who are still ajata-ruci (without much taste for hearing and chanting), should combine vaidhi-bhakti principles with their practice of raganuga-bhakti." In summary, according to Srila Jiva Gosvami there are two kinds of raganuga-bhaktas: jata-ruci (those whose taste has come about) and ajata-ruci (those whose taste has not yet come about). It is not that ajata-ruci devotees in ISKCON only deserve to be called "vaidhi-bhaktas." On the strength of Srila Jiva Gosvami's explanation of raganuga-bhakti, all ISKCON devotees may be called raganuga-bhaktas. Cc Madhya-lila 22.156-157 also confirms that vaidhi-sadhana is to be accepted by Lord Caitanya's followers as the external aspect of raganuga-sadhana, not as something separate from the practice of raganuga.

All this can be understood very practically simply by considering Srila Prabhupada's formula: in ISKCON, "Preaching is the essence." Preaching is bhagavata-vidhi activity, which means that it is raga-marga activity. In his instructions on preaching, Srila Prabhupada said many times that the fallen souls of this age will not be attracted through rules and regulations to Krsna's service. They have to get a taste first. That taste is made available to them via the bhagavata-vidhi, which means three things according to Sri Tattva-sutra: 1) direct association with Bhagavan as the holy name, 2) association with the bhagavata (the pure devotee), and 3) hearing Srīmad-Bhagavata philosophy. In 1965-66, Srila Prabhupada gathered his first followers in New York through raga (spontaneous attraction) inculcated by the bhagavata-vidhi of hearing and chanting. This remains the essence of ISKCON's preaching success today. Therefore those who follow Srila Prabhupada's preaching example are both Prabhupadanuga-and raganuga-bhaktas.

Q. *But raganuga-bhakti cannot be practiced by those who have not surpassed anartha-nivrtti, which the scriptures say is a very high level of purity. Do you really believe that ISKCON devotees have passed beyond anartha-nivrtti and ruci and come to the asakti stage, where raganuga practice begins?*

A. In a letter dated 17-02-68, Srila Prabhupada wrote: "I may say that this practical devotion is the secret to understanding the Sastras. My Guru Maharaja used to say that for one who is not engaged in devotional service, reading all the books is simply like licking the outside of the honey jar." Therefore the scriptural terms "anartha-nivrtti", "ruci" and "asakti" have to be understood in this way, in their practical sense. In an initiation lecture given in 1968, Srila Prabhupada explained, "So by following the regulative principles one becomes freed from all these sinful activities. He does not any more indulge in illicit sex life, he does not indulge in nonvegetarian diet, he does not indulge in intoxication and he does not indulge in gambling. That is called anartha-nivrtti. Unless one is above these four kinds of anartha, or sinful activities, one cannot be fixed up. When one is free from these four kinds of sinful activities, then he becomes fixed up. Nistha, fixed up, and then ruci. Ruci means he increases the taste. Then asakti. Asakti means attachment."

The symptoms of ruci and asakti are further explained in practical ISKCON terms in this quote from a Srīmad-Bhagavatam class given in 1973: "Ruci means taste. Why you are hearing about Krsna daily, the same thing? We are speaking nothing new. 'Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and you have to surrender.' This is our daily business. But why you are coming to hear the same hackneyed words? Because it is very pleasing. This is called ruci, taste, 'Yes, I want to hear this repeatedly. Yes. Krsna is the Supreme Lord, I am the eternal servant.' You have got a taste. Unless one gets the taste, then you'll say, 'What is this hackneyed word?' Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, twenty-four hours you can chant because you have got the taste. Others cannot do. This is called ruci. And ruci means asakti, attraction: 'I must go. I must chant. I must do.' Tato nistha, tato ruci, tato saktis."

Q. *Your explanation of raganuga preaching misses the essential process of following in the footsteps of the residents of Vrndavana. The bhagavata-vidhi you speak of is really only aisvarya-jnana (preaching about Krsna's opulence as the Lord of three energies, visnu-sakti, tatastha-sakti and maya-sakti). The real raga-marga bhagavata-vidhi is performed after the intimate mood of kevala-bhakti (the pure devotion of the residents of Vrajabhumi). How will ISKCON devotees ever enter Radha-Krsna nitya-lila unless they get a taste for hearing and chanting about the Lord's conjugal pastimes? How will this taste ever come by only preaching aisvarya-jnana? This is not raga-marga. It is vaidhi-marga.*

A. Certainly our aim is to increase the taste for hearing about Radha-Krsna nitya-lila.

That is the "substantive" purpose of the mission of ISKCON. What you seem to have trouble understanding is that this aim is fulfilled without separate endeavor when the devotee attains devotional service to Lord Caitanya's lotus feet through the execution of auspicious activities in His sankirtana mission. This is confirmed in Sri Caitanya-candramrtam 88 by Srila Prabodhananda Sarasvati.

yatha yatha gaur padaravinde vindeta bhaktim krta-punya-rasih tatha tathotsarpati hrday akasmad radha-padambhoja-sudhambu-rasih

"As one develops devotion to the lotus feet of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu due to heaps of auspicious activities, then according to the degree of that attachment, his heart becomes suddenly inundated with the nectar emanating from the lotus feet of Srimati Radharani."

This is further confirmed in Srila Narottama dasa Thakura's song, Gaurangera Dyuti Pada.

gauranga-gunete jhure nitya-lila tare sphure se jana bhakati-adhikara

gaurangera sangi-gane nitya-siddha kori' mane se jaya brajendra suta-pas

gaura-prema-rasarnave se tarange jeba dube se radha-madhava-antaranga

"That person who feelingly appreciates the movement of Lord Gauranga gets the adhikara (privilege) to enter Radha-Krsna nitya-lila. By accepting Lord Gauranga's associates as nitya-siddha devotees, one can be immediately promoted to the transcendental abode of Lord Krsna. One who dives deep into the ocean of Lord Gauranga's movement becomes a confidential devotee of Sri-Sri Radha-Madhava."

In the 18th chapter of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's Navadvipa-dhama-mahatmya, the exact method by which a devotee attains raga (loving attraction) in the madhurya mood for Sri-Sri Radha-Krsna is described as follows.

"But, on the other hand, whoever possesses the qualities beginning with humility and takes the association of devotees, will first worship Gauranga in dasya-rasa (servitude relationship). The dasya worship of Gauranga gradually becomes perfect. It is in this dasya mood of love that the devotees call Sri Caitanya "Mahaprabhu". If the devotee then proceeds to develop his love up to the standard of the Vrndavana mood, the form of Gaura in his worship becomes that of Sri-Sri Radha-Krsna. Radha and Krsna, becoming one, have descended in the form of Gauranga, and therefore the full pastimes of the Divine Couple are present in that form. Thus after the dasya relation reaches maturity in the heart of the living entity, the Vrndavan-lila naturally develops in his heart. This is how a devotee enters into the eternal pastimes of Radha-Krsna in Vrndavana."

Raganuga cultivation primarily means the cultivation of the mood of a servant of Lord Caitanya through the execution of His sankirtana mission. On the Lord's order, even the great Nityananda Prabhu (who is Balarama) and Haridasa Thakura (who is Lord Brahma) humbly went from door to door to give fallen souls the holy name. By following Lord Caitanya's order in the dasya mood, the preacher is awarded with Krsna-prema. This is why Srila Rupa Gosvami glorifies Lord Caitanya as the most munificent incarnation of Krsna. The same order to preach door to door has been given to ISKCON by Srila Prabhupada. In executing this order, ISKCON devotees will have almost no opportunity to speak about the Lord's intimate affairs with the gopis. But by pleasing Lord Caitanya through humble, sincere service, their progress in raganuga-bhakti will not be hindered.

Q. *Nonetheless, Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami says that Lord Caitanya's sankirtana mission is only external. This is seen in Cc. Adi-lila 4.7 and 8, as quoted below.*

"I have given the essential meaning of the fourth verse: this incarnation descends to propagate the chanting of the holy name and spread love of God. Although this is true, this is but the external reason for the Lord's incarnation. Please hear one other reason--the confidential reason--for the Lord's appearance."

The confidential reason was quoted previously as the "substantive explanation" of Lord Caitanya's appearance: He desired to taste prema-rasa and to promulgate raganuga-bhakti. ISKCON focuses only on the external aspect of Lord Caitanya's mission. That may give some benefit to the fallen souls of this material world, but if the internal aspect of the Lord's mission is neglected, how will the ISKCON devotees themselves attain pure Krsna consciousness?

A. There seems to be something amiss with the logic behind this question. The chanting of the holy name of Krsna is central to both the internal and external aspects of Lord Caitanya's appearance and mission. When the Lord tasted prema-rasa with Svarupa Damodara Gosvami and Ramananda Raya in Jagannatha Puri, He chanted the holy name of Krsna. When He performed sankirtana in Navadvipa-dhama and in South India, He chanted the holy name of Krsna. The holy name is Krsna, and as Srila Prabhupada said, "There is no difference between Krsna's inside and outside." Srila Prabhupada gave the example of the iron and the fire to show that there is no difference in effect between the "external" and "internal" practice of chanting Hare Krsna. When iron (the living entity) is placed in the fire (the process of devotional service beginning with hearing and chanting), the warming of the iron starts from the outside. But the end effect is that internally and externally the iron becomes just like fire. The red-hot state of the iron is compared to the full Krsna consciousness of the living entity. Because chanting and hearing results in remembrance of Krsna (i.e. Krsna consciousness), the effect on the chanter is the same whether the chanting is "internal" or "external." Srila Prabhupada said, "If you constantly remember the Supreme Lord, so you become automatically purified, internally and externally. Because the Lord is absolute, so if we chant the Lord's holy name, the name is also Lord. He has no difference between His name and Himself."

Srila Isvara Puri told Lord Caitanya at Gaya (Cc Adi 7.83):

krsna-nama-maha-mantrera ei ta' svabhava yei jape, tara krsne upajaye bhava

TRANSLATION

"It is the nature of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra that anyone who chants it immediately develops his loving ecstasy for Krsna."

Q. *But what about sravana, varana, smarana, apana and prapanna? The internal cultivation of these stages of raganuga, bhava and prema-bhakti is explicitly given in the sastras. Isn't it misleading to tell devotees to "just forget about that and go chant Hare Krsna and preach?"*

A. In an article entitled Nam Bhajan by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, two kinds of devotees are said to be prema-ruruksu (endowed with intense greed to achieve love of Godhead by the grace of the holy name of Krsna). These are the viviktanandis (also

known as bhajanandis) and the gosthyanandis. Bhajanandis engage in a method of worship of the holy name that is called nirjana-bhajana. Like Srila Haridasa Thakura, they chant 3 lakhs of holy names daily (i.e. 196 rounds of Hare Krsna Mahamantra within 24 hours time), and they avoid contact with outsiders as much as possible. Gosthyanandis are preachers who mix with the public in order to spread Krsna consciousness throughout the world. ISKCON is a gosthyanandi movement. Srila Prabhupada explained in a Srimad-Bhagavatam lecture of 1976: "There are gosthyanandi and bhajanandi. Bhajanandi is interested for his own welfare, or they think it that he is not competent enough to preach; therefore he does not go for preaching work. Sva-vimukti-kama: 'Let me look after my own affairs.' 'Oil your own machine.' So this is another stage, and other stage is a devotee taking all risk, preaching for the benefit of the whole human society. He is called gosthyanandi, increasing the number of devotees. That is preferred by Krsna. It is said in the Bhagavad-gita, ya imam paramam guhyam mad-bhaktessv abhidasyati: 'Anyone who is engaged in preaching this confidential science of Bhagavad-gita, 'na ca tasmad manusyesu kascid me priya-krttamah, 'nobody is dearer to Me than he is.' So if you want very quickly recognition by Krsna, go on preaching Krsna consciousness. Even if it imperfectly done, but because you are sincere in whatever capacity you have got, if you preach, then Krsna will be very much pleased."

Both gosthyanandis and bhajanandis perform raganuga nama-bhajana, a deep personal worship of the holy name of Krsna, which is what we in ISKCON do as japa and mantradhya (Gayatri meditation). Thus both gosthyanandis and bhajanandis strive to pass through the stages of sravana (attentive hearing of the holy name), varana (acceptance of the holy name in the heart), smarana (constant remembrance of the holy name), apanna (full absorption of the mind into the holy name) and prapanna (attainment of one's svarupa in Krsna's pastimes). But since the preacher is most dear to Krsna, the Lord is most inclined to help the gosthyanandi attain perfection in nama-bhajana. Even if a busy preacher cannot find the time to chant 196 rounds a day, the minimum of 16 rounds that he does chant attracts Krsna's special mercy. Thus the gosthyanandi makes rapid advancement in nama-bhajana by the sincerity of his preaching efforts.

Q. *Would there be something wrong with an advanced ISKCON devotee utilizing methods of nirjana-bhajana in his worship of the holy name?*

A. Srila Prabhupada did not take to nirjana-bhajana even at the last stage of his manifest pastimes on earth. He remained engaged in preaching work to the end, and it is quite clear that he expected his disciples to follow his example. Previously, when gosthyanandi devotees grew old and physically feeble, they might go into seclusion in order to devote themselves fully to japa and remembrance of Krsna. But nirjana-bhajana was forbidden by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura because he saw that the mind of modern man is too prone to pollution by thoughts of woman, wealth and fame. He therefore ordered his disciples to remain always engaged in sankirtana, and in this way reach the perfectional stage of raganuga nama-bhajana. He wrote in verse 19 of Vaisnava ke:

sridayitadasa kirtanete asa kara uccaih svare harinama-rava
kirtana-prabhava smarana svabhava se kale bhajana-nirjana sambhava

"This Sri-dayita dasa (His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura - the humble servant of the all-merciful Srimati Radharani) simply desires to be absorbed in the nectar of spreading the glories of Lord Krsna's holy names. My dear mind, now let us loudly chant the holy names of Krsna so we can continuously remain in the ocean of transcendental nectar. The congregational chanting of the holy names of Krsna awakens the transcendental quality

of natural spontaneous loving remembrance of Lord Krsna (including the Lord's form, qualities and pastimes). Only at that time does the confidential realization and pure practice of nirjana-bhajana in loving devotional service to Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha-Krsna become possible."

Q. *May ISKCON devotees read, write about and discuss confidential narrations of the madhurya-lila of Krsna and the gopis from authorized rasika scriptures?*

A. Yes. But we have to be cautious. In this regard, Srila Prabhupada instructed his disciples in 1969 as follows.

Prabhupada: The policy should be that the people may not understand gopis like ordinary girls or like that. You should be careful to present the gopis. It does not mean that "We shall not utter even the name of gopis. We have taken vow to boycott the gopis." No. They are our worshipable devotees. How we can avoid them?

Satsvarupa: What about writing down "kissing the lips of Krsna"?

Prabhupada: No. That we should avoid. That we should avoid. But that is not abominable. According to time and circumstances... That thing I have described. The fact is fact. Just like when I am describing Krsna's lila--I writing Krsna's life--so I cannot give up that portion of His life, when Krsna is actually kissing the gopis in rasa dance.

Satsvarupa: But that's in the books. Not in the public...

Prabhupada: Yes. So in such circumstances, of course, we can give.

But as far as possible, very cautiously and very rarely we shall present. Caitanya Mahaprabhu's life we see that in public He never discussed about Krsna's lila with the gopis. That was very confidential discussion amongst His own circle, Raya Ramananda, Svarupa Damodara, like that. And He inquired... Even a learned scholar, He discussed about the philosophy, that Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. But when there was a great devotee like Ramananda Raya, He relished gopis', I mean to say, intimate behavior with Krsna. So we should remember this, that public may misunderstand this. Therefore we have to present these things very cautiously, not very openly. They may misunderstand.

Srila Prabhupada's concern was that "The public may misunderstand this." Therefore the topic of Krsna's lila with the gopis is not to be preached openly. Even within ISKCON, we have our own "public" of neophyte devotees whose discrimination is sometimes found to be wanting. Either they may themselves misunderstand the pastimes, or they may inexpertly present them to outsiders who will surely misunderstand them. This topic is therefore not to be propagated throughout ISKCON and the public in general. It is confidential.

In 1976, Srila Prabhupada expressed great displeasure with a group of devotees in Los Angeles who met regularly to discuss the loving pastimes of Krsna and the gopis. These devotees were not strong in sadhana-bhakti and performance of sankirtana, and were under the influence of so-called babajis of Vrndavana. Thus they became victims of misconceptions about rasa. One thing that angered Prabhupada in particular was their attitude towards krsna-katha that does not directly pertain to gopi-bhava. They considered it of lesser importance. Thus Prabhupada rebuked them for thinking that "Mother Yasoda is less than the gopis."

Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta Ādi-līlā 4.42 and 43 states--

"Four kinds of devotees are the receptacles of the four kinds of mellows in love of God, namely servitude, friendship, parental affection and conjugal love. Each kind of devotee feels that his sentiment is the most excellent, and thus in that mood he tastes great happiness with Lord Kṛṣṇa."

In his purport to Text 44 of this chapter, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes--

"No one is higher or lower than anyone else in transcendental relationships with the Lord, for in the absolute realm everything is equal. But although these relationships are absolute, there are also transcendental differences between them. Thus the transcendental relationship of conjugal love is considered the highest perfection."

The madhurya-rasa is considered to be the best of all relationships because it includes all the other rasas and yet is the sweetest of all. The gopīs are so attached to Kṛṣṇa that they consider all of His pastimes in any relationship to be nectar for their ears. So addicted are they to hearing and chanting Kṛṣṇa's glories that they are unable to stop even if the pastime under discussion gives them pain--for instance, Kṛṣṇa's leaving Vṛndāvana for Mathura (vid. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's famous talk with the bumblebee).

So how can a devotee aspiring for madhurya-rasa not care to hear about Kṛṣṇa's activities with His mother and father, or with His cowherd boyfriends, or with Arjuna? Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "That is called sahaḥjīya. The sahaḥjīyas will never read Bhagavad-gīta. [Sarcastic] Because they have been elevated to the mellows of conjugal love. Therefore they have no interest in Bhagavad-gīta. Or when you discuss Śrīmad-Bhagavatam on the philosophical point, janmādyasya, they also do not attend."

A Bengali academic named Manindra Mohan Bose has written a well-researched book entitled *The Post-Caitanya Sahaḥjīya Cult of Bengal* (Gyan Publishing House, Delhi, 1986). He identifies the difference between the Sahaḥjīyas and the Vaiṣṇavas thusly: "Up to this limit the Vaiṣṇavas and Sahaḥjīyas are in perfect agreement, but beyond this the Sahaḥjīya doctrine has separated from the main current, and hence this is the turning point of the Sahaḥjīya doctrine. The Vaiṣṇavas have not discarded the other three emotions [viz. dasya, sakhyā and vatsalyā], though they lay special stress on Madhura, for it is maintained by them that a devotee may adopt any of the four in his attempt to realize God...But the Sahaḥjīyas have adopted the Madhura Rasa only, asserting that the mystic doctrine of love rests on the foundation of that emotion. With this conception they have separated from the parent stock, and working on this principle, they have turned their thoughts to a new channel." (Pg 174-176)

It has previously been explained that Lord Caitanya's followers primarily aspire for a dasya relationship with the Lord in His pastimes of sankīrtana. This primary aspiration does not forestall discussion of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with the gopīs. But without serving Lord Caitanya, entrance into Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa madhurya-līlā is impossible. However, the prakṛta-sahaḥjīyas are so "devoted" to the madhurya-bhava that they even try to approach Lord Caitanya in that mood (vid. the Gaurāṅga-nāgarī sect). The so-called devotion of the prakṛta-sahaḥjīyas is therefore really only an offensive obsession with sex.

There's an old English saying: "Fools rush in where angels dare to tread." Impelled by lust, the foolish sahaḥjīyas attempt to force their way into madhurya-līlā heedless of their own anarthas. One device they've invented to intrude into Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is the siddha-prāṇalī

initiation, in which the guru "reveals" to his thoroughly neophyte disciples their siddha-svarupas (eternal spiritual identities) in Krsna-lila. The disciples receive a mantra that they use to meditate upon their supposed eternal identities, and then continue in their ordinary worldly affairs proudly thinking, "I am a gopi" or "I am Radha's pet bird." The siddha-pranali initiation is just a trap of maya, and it serves as an example of the danger that awaits unqualified persons who prematurely try to understand Krsna's confidential pastimes.

So, in conclusion, though Srila Prabhupada writes in Cc Adi 4.30, "If one is a sincere and pure devotee, the material lust in his heart is completely vanquished as he discusses the lusty feelings between the gopis and Krsna, and he makes quick progress in spiritual life," the cautions mentioned above should always be remembered.

Q. *What is wrong with going to senior Gaudiya Vaisnava authorities who are not members of ISKCON for instruction in raganuga-bhakti?*

A. There is a 1982 GBC resolution prohibiting ISKCON devotees from taking spiritual instruction outside of ISKCON unless they have the approval of the GBC. If a devotee disobeys this resolution, he "severs his connection to ISKCON."

This resolution was passed for good reasons arising from not only bad experience, but also Srila Prabhupada's numerous admonitions that his disciples not go to Gaudiya Matha for knowledge of "higher things" ("He will say, 'Swamiji [i.e. Srila Prabhupada] has brought you to bhakti, but I will teach you higher things.'")

Some disciples of Srila Prabhupada have permission from the GBC for a limited relationship with a Gaudiya Vaisnava sadhu.

What about "bona fide" siddha-pranali?

While in Vrndavana I had an interesting talk with several Godbrothers on siddha-pranali, which I described as a sahajiya practice in my last text to this conference on raganuga-bhakti. So here's some further considerations on the difference between bhajanandi and gostyanandi raganuga-sadhana. I do not deny that the text that follows is opinionated. But the opinions expressed herein are based upon sastric statements.

During a morning walk on June 7, 1976, an exchange took place between Srila Prabhupada and his disciples on the subject of siddha-pranali, which was prompted by Prabhupada's concern about the so-called "L.A. gopi-bhava club" that I mentioned in my last text. Below I'll quote a short excerpt from that conversation.

Prabhupada: Then everything will be finished. Preaching will be finished. In this sahajiya party, then preaching will be finished. Siddha-pranali.

Tamala Krsna: What does that mean, Srila Prabhupada, siddha-pranali? Prabhupada: Siddha-pranali is nonsense. They have manufactured a siddha-pranali.

Here we see Srila Prabhupada, "Siddha-pranali is nonsense." But he also said, "They have manufactured a siddha-pranali." Could this mean that there is a bona fide siddha-pranali method of initiation that is not manufactured by sahajiyas, but is authorized by the Gaudiya Vaisnava acaryas?

In Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's Harinama Cintamani, a method of cultivation of the ekadasa-bhava (eleven features of the siddha-deha or spiritual body of a manjari assistant of Srimati Radharani) is described. In brief, it consists of the chanting, hearing and remembrance of the gopal and kama-gayatri mantra (i.e. the last 2 of the 7 lines of gayatri that we receive in ISKCON) through the 5 stages of development from sravana-dasa to prapana-dasa. As this chanting, hearing and remembering develops, the spiritual master helps the disciple to focus his mind on his eternal name, form, age, dress, relationship with Krsna, group of associates, order given by the group leader, service, ambition, mood of a maidservant and residence. These are the ekadasa-bhava. The cultivation of ekadasa-bhava is what is meant by the term siddha-pranali.

So, again we must return to the question: since Srila Prabhupada did not teach his disciples this siddha-pranali process of ekadasi-bhava raganuga cultivation, must ISKCON devotees go elsewhere to learn about it if they want to attain perfection in devotional service?

In Chapter Thirty-one of the Teachings of Lord Caitanya, Srila Prabhupada writes the following.

"Lord Krsna is worshiped by the gayatri mantra, and the specific mantra by which He is worshiped is called kama-gayatri. Vedic literatures explain that that sound vibration which can elevate one from mental concoction is called gayatri. The kama-gayatri mantra is composed of 24 1/2 syllables thus:

klim kama-devaya vidmahe puspa-banaya dhimahi
tanno 'nangah pracodayat

This kama-gayatri is received from the spiritual master when the disciple is advanced in chanting Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. In other words this kama-gayatri mantra and samskara, or reformation of a perfect brahmana, are offered by the spiritual master when he sees that his disciple is advanced in spiritual knowledge. Even then, the kama-gayatri is not uttered under certain circumstances. In any case, the chanting of Hare Krsna is sufficient to elevate one to the highest spiritual platform."

We see from Lord Caitanya's Sri Sri Siksastakam that the elevation to the highest stage of vipralambha-seva (service to Krsna in the mood of conjugal separation as expressed in the 8th verse) is the natural effect of chanting, hearing and remembering Krsna's holy name in sankirtana. There is no mention in the Siksastakam of meditation upon the kama-gayatri. The only method given in Siksastakam is sankirtana.

That does not mean that Lord Caitanya never wanted Gaudiya Vaisnava spiritual masters to teach ekadasa-bhava cultivation. But the teachings of the guru are like the medical treatment given by doctor to his patients: the treatment is adjusted according to the nature of the patient's condition. What is good for one, may not be good for another. However, the method of sankirtana is good in all cases, because it is the yuga-dharma. In ISKCON, though second-initiates do chant kama-gayatri, we all depend primarily upon the sankirtana chanting of the Hare Krsna Mahamantra to help us in our japa and kama-gayatri dhyana. For spiritual progress, gostyanandis primarily depend upon the special mercy that Krsna bestows through sankirtana.

The ekadasa-bhava process of raganuga cultivation explained in Harinama Cintamani is

particularly meant for bhajananandis. There's no doubt of that, because in this explanation Srila Haridasa Thakura states that devotees who accept this method of cultivation must be chanting 196 rounds daily. That helps us understand why Srila Prabhupada said in the morning walk referred to above that if ISKCON devotees attempt the siddha-pranali method, "Preaching will be finished." Who in ISKCON will find time to preach if he chants 196 rounds a day? Moreover, who in ISKCON CAN chant 196 rounds a day? Therefore, if ISKCON devotees attempt to perform bhajananandi ekadasa-bhava cultivation, they will just manufacture a siddha-pranali, being unable to practice it as it is described in the Harinama Cintamani. As explained in my previous text, ISKCON is a gostyanandi movement. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati forbade his disciples to practice the bhajananandi method of nirjana-bhajana, not because nirjana-bhajana is unheard-of in our sampradaya, but because he saw that people are now too fallen to practice it properly. Therefore Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati established in his Sri Gaudiya Math the proper format of gostyanandi raganuga cultivation for the modern age; Srila Prabhupada exactly reproduced that format in ISKCON.

But though the format is different, the essence of gostyanandi and bhajananandi raganuga-sadhana is the same.

In Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura's Ragavarta-candrika (which contains a description of raganuga-sadhana), the essence of raganuga bhakti is explained thusly:

prathamatah krsnam smaran iti smaranasyatra raganugayam mukhyetvam ragasya manodharmatvat

"As raga (attachment to Krsna) is the occupation of the mind, so also simultaneously must be smarana (remembering Krsna); therefore smarana is the main limb of sadhana for the practioner of raganuga-bhakti."

The idea here is that there can be no raganuga-bhakti without remembering Krsna. Therefore in essence raganuga-bhakti means the cultivation of remembrance of Krsna.

As explained in the last text on this subject, one who is a Prabhupada-anuga is certainly a raganuga-bhakta. Is not Srila Prabhupada an eternal resident of Vrndavana? So if we aspire to follow Srila Prabhupada in his service to Krsna, there is no doubt that this is raganuga-bhakti. If we remember Srila Prabhupada's instructions and example in devotional service, that is smaranam, the essential limb of raganuga-bhakti. Srila Prabhupada's instruction to us is the same as Caitanya Mahaprabhu's to Lord Nityananda and Srila Haridasa Thakura: prati ghare ghare jai kara aei bhiksa bolo krsna bhaja krsna kare krsnasiksa--"Go from door to door and beg everyone you see to chant Krsna's holy name, worship Krsna and hear the philosophy of Krsna consciousness." By executing this instruction, one is accepted into Lord Caitanya's lila in the mood of dasya-rasa. In this mood, one remembers one's own spiritual master as an eternal associate of Mahaprabhu who is handing His order to us: pratah sriman-navadvipe dvi-netram dvi-bhujam gurum varabhaya-pradam santam smaret tan-nama-purvakam--"In the morning (before engaging in Krsna's service) one should remember the spiritual maste as being situated in Navadvipa-dhama, having two eyes and two arms, as being peaceful, and as bestowing all benediction and fearlessness upon chanting his name." And thus by the grace of Sri Sri Guru and Gouranga, the devotee who always remembers their order gets the adhikari (privilege) to enter in Radha-Krsna nitya-lila in Sri Vrndavana-dhama.

Someone may reply, "Yes, but the adhikari that comes by sankirtana must come through

the siddha-pranali method by which the spiritual master reveals the eternal identity of his disciple in Vraja-lila. Then the disciple cultivates the remembrance of that identity under the direction of the spiritual master, as advanced devotees are doing in Radhakunda even today."

No doubt everything depends upon the mercy of the spiritual master. But in ISKCON the spiritual master gives the mercy of Srila Prabhupada, the Founder-acarya. Srila Prabhupada never even slightly indicated that his disciples should take to the babaji style of siddha-pranali at any stage. Prabhupada did not give siddha-pranali to Sriman Jayananda Prabhu when he was dying of cancer, or tell him to take a bhajan-kutir in Radhakunda, although Jayananda's purity was so highly respected by Prabhupada that Prabhupada ordered that his disappearance date be made a feast day on the Vaisnava calendar. Srila Prabhupada even once gave babaji-vesa (the white robes of a bhajanandi) to a disciple who was told by a doctor that he only had 6 months to live. But in this case also, Srila Prabhupada gave no siddha-pranali, though he told this disciple to stay in Mayapura in a grass hut, eat only rice and chant the Hare Krsna mantra all day. This boy gave up his babaji dress and returned to material life when another doctor told him he would not die so soon. In Prabhupada's last days of earthly pastimes, Bhakti Caru Maharaja asked him how his disciples would realize their relationship with Krsna in Prabhupada's physical absence. Prabhupada replied that when his disciples were ready, he would reveal everything from the transcendental platform.

Was Srila Prabhupada neglectful of siddha-pranali while he was with us because he had so many other preparatory things to accomplish? Was it because his own disciples were not yet ready for siddha-pranali? No-- Srila Prabhupada was simply following in the footsteps of his own spiritual master.

It is said that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati told his disciples that their siddha-pranali mantra was "trnad api sunicena taror api sahisnuna amanina manadena KIRTANIYA SADA HARI". And it is said that when Srila Gaura Kisora das Babaji, when asked by someone to reveal their svarupa, replied, "Your svarupa will be revealed in the syllables of the Hare Krsna Mahamantra."

Now, to be fair, it has also been said that during his lifetime Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura revealed the svarupa of one or perhaps a few of his disciples. I don't know if this is really true. But even if it is, we should not forget that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta had thousands of disciples whom he did not speak to about their siddha-svarupa. Was that because they were not qualified to be instructed in this most confidential subject? Well, one of them is Srila Prabhupada. Remember that it's not just we ISKCONians who say that Srila Prabhupada is Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's foremost disciple. Many disciples of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati have said the same thing. So what does siddha-pranali have to do with Srila Prabhupada's position and accomplishments? In a word: nothing.

As explained in the last text on this subject, the gostyanandi devotee is helped by Krsna's special mercy, because Krsna is so especially pleased by the preacher. By preaching constantly under the order of Sri Sri Guru and Gouranga, one keeps constantly in the state of smaranam, remembering Krsna. By constant remembrance of Krsna one always associates with Krsna. And by association with Krsna on the liberated platform, one receives his spiritual form as given by Krsna.

In Srila Jiva Gosvami's Priti-sandarbhya, Chapter 10, we learn how Krsna awards eternal forms to souls who ascend to the liberated platform.

vaikunthasya bhagavato jyotiramsabhuta vaikunthalokasoharupa ya ananta murttayah tatra
varttante tasamekayasaha muktasyaikasya murttih bhagavato kriyata iti
vaikunthasya murttiriva murttir yesamityuktah

"Situated in Vaikuntha, as part and parcel of the bodily effulgence of the Supreme Lord, are existing unlimited forms (murtis) which appear most beautiful. The Lord endows each and every liberated soul with one of these forms."

Krsna is not different from His holy name. As one starts to chant, he is liberated from material contact, and the more one is liberated from material contact, the more his chanting engenders loving remembrance Krsna, and the more one lovingly remembers Krsna, the more do the qualities of Krsna manifest within that devotee (krsna bhakte krsnere guna sakala sancari, from C.c. Madhya 22.75), including the quality of satcidananda vigraha (spiritual form). So we should simply depend upon our service to the holy name in the sankirtana movement for all success.

One of the main reasons for the breakdown of the Gaudiya Math after Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura's disappearance was the loss of faith in this very point--that by simply by preaching the glories of the holy name, all spiritual qualities would manifest in the disciple. You probably know that instead of following Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's instruction to manage the institution through a committee (the forerunner of the GBC), the leaders of the Gaudiya Math elected an acarya-guru. This person deviated by taking to the siddha-pranali method. After he fell down, the Gaudiya Math split up. Later on, Audolomi Maharaja, the brother of Srila Prabhupada's sannyasa-guru Kesavaprajna Maharaja, exchanged the saffron robes of a tridandi sannyasi for the white robes of a bhajanandi. This again showed the same influence of the manufactured siddha-pranali tendency, which was forbidden by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. For this reason, though they were brothers, Kesavaprajna Maharaja never spoke to Audolomi Maharaja again for the rest of his life.

So these stories just show how careful we must be to "don't to try to add something new", as Srila Prabhupada so often warned. The siddha-pranali method is not approved by the Founder-acarya of ISKCON, so it is therefore quite fruitless to try to practice it, even if we think there is a qualified Vaisnava-guru outside of ISKCON who can initiate us into it. Srila Gaura Kisora dasa Babaji compared the siddha-pranali attempt to a woman who goes into the maternity ward of a hospital, lays in a bed and moans as if she's about to give birth--though she is not even pregnant. She can "practice" all she likes, but she will never give birth that way.